

BIRDS NEW ZEALAND

Te Kahui Matai Manu o Aotearoa

No.29 March 2021



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.

Weka, Opportunist and Battler

This recently published book about Weka by Ralph Powlesland and Agnes Takacs draws from a variety of sources, but mainly an ongoing study of Weka at Manaroa by Mary and Ralph Powlesland. There is also information from published sources such as books, websites, and scientific papers. We've tried to include as much information about Weka as possible.

The soft-cover book (15cm x 23cm) is 96 pages with 82 images. Chapter titles include Different kinds of Weka, Territory and fighting, Calls, Foraging techniques, Foods, Roosting, Breeding, Juvenile dispersal, Lifespan, Weka and introduced mammalian predators, Roles in the environment, and Translocations of Weka.

The book has many wonderful images of Weka, some of them action shots showing Weka involved in a variety of activities, including sleeping, bathing, fighting, incubating and rearing chicks.

The recommended retail price is \$25. Copies are available from The CopyPress: www.copypress.co.nz/shop/weka-opportunist-and-battler Bookshops and libraries may have copies (ISBN: 978-0-473-53864-4)



	NO.29 MARCH 2021	
3	<i>From the President's Desk</i>	
4	<i>NZ Bird Annual Conference & AGM 2021</i>	
5	<i>Notices of Motion</i>	
6	<i>Call for Applications to BNZRF 2021</i>	
7	<i>Satellite tagging of Bar-tailed Godwits</i>	
8	<i>Tracking Tawaki in fjord ecosystems</i>	
9	<i>New Zealand Bird Atlas summer update</i>	
10	<i>Fiordland Storm Petrels in the Spotlight</i>	
14	<i>Oscar Thomas - True Young Explorer</i>	
15	<i>Movements of Black-fronted Terns</i>	
16	<i>Regional Roundup</i>	
19	<i>R.H.D. Stidolph's 100-year legacy</i>	

COVER IMAGE

Black Stilt or Kaki. Photo by Mike Ashbee.

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

Pete's Nest

Situated in the ancient treetops, overlooking the ocean, and just 30 minutes north of Coromandel town, the property is encapsulated by giant native trees and a plethora of resident native bird life. Relax among an amazing array of Kaka, Kereru, Riroriro, Tauhau, Korimako, Tui and more. Also within close proximity of the Waikawau Bay Wetland Sanctuary and Colville Harbour, which hold many and varied shorebirds.

Email: petehall9756@gmail.com

Phone. 027 3593 619

More info: <https://t.hmwy.io/82xeQtexkdb>



From the President's Desk

I've had a wonderful summer so far, birding here in Otago/Southland and also in the Tasman and Marlborough Districts. The *eBird* Alerts that I get on my phone have encouraged me to go to new and different places to watch birds. It's been a bit of a struggle to get back to the daily work cycle.

Council Meeting

Council met by video call in November and you can see the results of some of our work elsewhere in this edition of *Birds New Zealand*.

Society Strategy

Ian Armitage has continued to lead the review of the Society Strategy. It has now been posted on the Society's website and your comments on this are invited. For the strategy to be of use to Council and you as members of the Society it needs to be relevant, and to ensure relevancy membership engagement is essential. Comments on the draft strategy are invited here: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/news/revise-draft-strategy/>

Notices of Motion

This time a year ago as part of the lead-up to the 2020 Conference, Council had developed a number of Notices of Motion to amend the Constitution and review Society subscriptions. These matters need to be debated at an AGM and so they have been re-endorsed by Council and have been included in this edition of *Birds New Zealand* for consideration at the AGM in Thames.

The formal notices are published elsewhere in this edition of *Birds New Zealand* but they cover changes relating to the Society's name; how to get the most out of the newly updated subscription database; and the need to review the Society's subscription rates.

Membership of the Royal Society of New Zealand

Ian is also leading a discussion with the Royal Society of New Zealand about the merits and obligations of *Birds New Zealand* becoming a constituent member of the Royal Society.

Health and Safety

As part of the ongoing implementation of the Society's Health and Safety Policy Council has purchased a set of High Visibility vests for use on Society projects. The Executive Officer has distributed two to each region for their use. If more are required these can be purchased through the EO.

Engagement with incoming ministers

Letters of introduction about the purpose and scope of *Birds New Zealand* have been sent to new ministers in the Government. We have written to Hon. Kiritapu Allen, Minister of Conservation, to Hon Dr. Megan Woods, Minister of Research, Science and Innovation, and to Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall, Associate Minister of Research, Science and Innovation. We will continue to engage with leading ministers in the Government to ensure that they are aware of the Society and its work.

Notornis

The last part, Volume 67, of *Notornis* was the significant edition on Wader Studies in New Zealand. This is a very elegant part of the Society's Journal. I'm aware that some members probably did not receive their December mailing of *Birds New Zealand* magazine and *Notornis* until after Christmas - in my case, the second week of January. This was unfortunate and related to the fact that the *Wader Studies* issue of *Notornis* was about three times bigger than a 'normal' issue and so took longer to produce, resulting in the mailing not going to NZ Post until about a week

before Christmas - at a time when there was already a lot of post backed-up in the system awaiting delivery.

Applications for research funds

Applications for the David Medway Scholarship, and the Marj Davis Scholarship are open now with details posted on the Society's website. Applications to the Birds New Zealand Research Fund start on 1 April (see page 6). If you think that any of these could support the logistics and purchase of equipment and consumables for your project then please consider applying.

New Zealand Bird Atlas

As of December Biz Bell reports that there are more than 97,000 checklists contributed by 834 people and that 82% of all squares are covered once or more. Observers have seen 255 species. The Atlas Team at Wildlife Management International continues to respond to emails and phone calls regarding the Atlas. The Atlas Team has also been engaging with more community groups, universities and other consultancies to advocate for the Atlas and their participation. One tool that the team has created is a quick 3-minute promotional video that helps answer the three key questions, 'what is the Atlas?', 'why is it important?' and 'how can I get involved?'. This video can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVcCjKaTEnc&ab_channel=NewZealandBirdAtlas

A regional NZ *eBird* reviewer workshop was held via Zoom in November. This was to help all NZ *eBird* reviewers to chat with each other for the first time and to try formalise roles and promote better communication between reviewers. The Atlas team are continuing to work on a data sharing agreement with the Department of Conservation. This will enable the Department's Tier One monitoring data to be added to the Atlas dataset. This will be a significant boost to coverage to remote and mountainous sites, but it will add to, and not replace Society efforts to attempt to ensure national coverage.

This project has been supported by the Society's long-term partner Goodness Kitchen and I am grateful for their ongoing support.

Birds New Zealand Fledging Fund

I wish to remind you all that the Society's Fledging Fund is open to donations. The fund is dedicated to supporting Student Members of the Society to attend a New Zealand Bird Conference and to present at the conference. The fund will be an endowment fund and will disburse funds for student members from donations received. If members wish to make a contribution to the fund so we can disburse grants for the 2021 Conference then please do so by making a donation when registering for the conference, or by contacting the Membership Secretary. New Zealand Bird Conference

Registrations for the 2021 New Zealand Birds Conference to be held in Thames on 5th-7th June are open. I'm really looking forward to catching up with you, the Society, on this weekend. David Lawrie and his team have put together a weekend filled with science opportunities to mingle and a good selection of field trips. I strongly recommend that you register as early as you can to ensure you can participate in one of the field trips and the other activities.

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.

Leaving a gift in your Will

Birds New Zealand is working hard to ensure a better future for New Zealand birds, but to continue the work we need your help. No matter how much it is, leaving a gift in your Will really does make a difference. All funds received go into the Projects Assistance Fund, so you can be confident that your gift will have a real impact on current and future bird research projects.

It is important that you 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.

If you have any questions please contact our Executive Officer, Ingrid Hutzler: eo@birdsnz.org.nz

STOP PRESS: During a Birds New Zealand wader survey at Invercargill Estuary Shellbanks on 24th February Joseph Bliss and Sean Jacques observed and photographed an adult Gull-billed Tern feeding a flighted juvenile. If accepted, this would be the first NZ record of this species raising a juvenile.

Benefits of membership

You can join Birds New Zealand today for just over a dollar a week. The subscription rate of \$70 per year is very reasonable. For students it is just \$35 per year:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/join-today/>

Members receive our quarterly colour magazine, *Birds New Zealand*, and *Notornis*, our acclaimed quarterly scientific journal. To join, please visit our website and fill in the online membership form:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/membership-form-nz/#join>

Or contact our Membership Secretary: membership@birdsnz.org.nz

Or contact your nearest Regional Representative:

www.birdsnz.org.nz/contact/

New members

Birds New Zealand warmly welcomes the following new members: Mhairi McCready (Northland); Harry Boorman, Pauline Raimbault, Annie West, Deidre Myers, Robin Kearns, Ethan Zhang, Shoshanah Ballard, Enzo Reyes, Max Glass, Michal Chren, John Bertenshaw, Vicki Carpenter, Patricia Pillay (Auckland); Sue Townson, Don Scott (South Auckland); Wendi Lane, Sarah Waymouth, Elliot Parkes (Waikato); Kay Taylor, Ian Taylor, Matt Taylor (BoP/Volcanic Plateau); Rose Fillary, Frank Fillary, John Hansen (Hawkes Bay); Amy McKenzie, Malcolm Pinfold, Brenda Pinfold, Megan Jolly (Manawatu); Catherine Yates, Philippa Cherrill, Claire Bullock, Hugo Reeve, Pam Watson, Robert Hanbury-Sparrow, Chris Mitchell, Jaz Hamilton (Wellington); Donald Morrisey, Wendy Callaway, Chris Turton, Claire Killner (Nelson); Rangi Zimmerman, Paulla-Jean Pridham (Marlborough); Morgan Fox, Johnathan Hardie, Sarah Coutinho, Murette Wells, Richard Hensby, Linley Earnshaw (Canterbury); Charlotte Patterson, Sophie Fern, Joseph Altobelli, Gwynne Somerville, Johnathan Bailey, Petra Simpson (Otago); Anna Harris (Southland).

Revised Strategy

In 2015 the Ornithological Society of New Zealand/ Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa celebrated its 75th anniversary. As a contribution to this moment in the Society's history we adopted a strategy for the 2015 to 2024 period that is intended to advance our Purpose, Aim and Objectives, and achieving improved public understanding and wider acceptance of the Society throughout New Zealand. The framework provided by the strategy has served us well since 2015 but Council considered that a mid-term revision was needed because of several changes that now influence our governance.

In late 2020/early 2021 a draft revision of the strategy was assembled by Council and endorsed by Regional Representatives and Scheme Convenors. It looks ahead to 2024 and incorporates various amendments that are appropriate to the Society's present circumstances. Important amendments include steps to encourage engagement with Māori, and increasing opportunities for the participation of young people in the Society's activities. In order to broaden the basis of consultation, Council encourages members to submit their views on the draft revised strategy. Comments should be emailed to the Executive Officer by 10 April 2021 (osnzeo@slingshot.co.nz).

IAN ARMITAGE, VICE-PRESIDENT

2021 Garden Bird Survey

The 2021 annual Garden Bird Survey will be the fifteenth, 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 26th June and 4th July 2021 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://gardenbirdssurvey.landcareresearch.co.nz/>

Making a donation

Birds New Zealand is working hard to ensure a better future for our birds, but to continue 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 easy 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

Donations received with thanks

Birds New Zealand warmly thanks the following members for their generous donations: Peter and Susan Schweigman, Michael North, Peter Howden, Mary McEwen, Wendi Lane, Annie West, Ashley and Sue Reid, Anita Spencer, Colin Lunt, Kevin and Janet Vaughan, Heather Smithers, Andrew King, Paul and Joy Sagar, Adele Bittner, Enviro Research, Stuart Laurensen, Noel Ward, John A Stewart, Stan Emmens, Darren Lees, Bruce McKinlay, Rob and Anneke Schukard, Mike Hermansson, Denise Poyner, Patsy Garrett, Philip Munns, John Troost, Hinrich Voges, Robert Hanbury-Sparrow, Francois Flanagan, Geoff de Lisle, Anthony Carey, Susan Steedman, Jilian Hanna, Christina Troup, Chris Foreman, Kathryn Jones, Stuart Nicholson, and Isabelle Delmotte.

Nominations for Regional Representatives 2022

Each Regional Representative serves for a one-year term, starting 1st January, although incumbents can be re-nominated for an unlimited number of terms. Nominations for each region close with the Secretary (Lynne Anderson, P.O. Box 834, Nelson 7040 or secretary@birdsnz.org.nz) on 31st July 2021. The nomination paper for each RR must be signed by two financial members of the Society from that region and must be consented to in writing by the person nominated, who must also be a financial member of the Society. If the Secretary receives more than one valid nomination from a given region, a postal ballot will be held among the financial members of that region. If no nomination is received from a region, Council may appoint an RR for the 2022 year. As per the Constitution, where practicable each region shall hold an annual meeting before 31st March where an annual report of the region's activities and a financial statement for the previous year are presented to the members.

Change to Constitution: Subscription date

On behalf of Council, I move three Notices of Motion to amend the Constitution of The Ornithological Society of New Zealand Inc. The existing rules concerning membership administration require amendment following technical improvements made in 2020 that now provide a more secure and efficient basis for managing the records of members, in particular for a proposed change to the timing of invoicing of annual subscriptions. The proposed changes to the specific rules are:

6.2 The full annual subscription shall be payable on the anniversary of when a member joined the Society whereupon they shall be entitled to receive any publication of the Society and to exercise all the rights of their class of Membership for one year.

6.3 No Member shall be entitled to receive any publication of the Society or exercise any of the rights of their class of Membership unless an annual subscription has been paid within eight weeks of the anniversary of the Member joining the Society.

6.5 To be repealed.

The full background paper is here:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Notices-of-Motion-Subscription-Date-for-2021-AGM.pdf>

BRUCE MCKINLAY/IAN ARMITAGE

Notice of Motion: Change to Constitution

In terms of Rule 17.1 of the Constitution, Notice of Motion is given to members that the Constitution of The Ornithological Society of New Zealand Inc. be amended at the Annual General Meeting of the Society to be held in Christchurch in 2020. On behalf of Council, I move the following **Notice of Motion** to change the Constitution of The Ornithological Society of New Zealand Inc. This change will update the Constitution in terms of the names of the Society.

Updated Rule 1

It is moved that Rule 1 relating to the name of the Society be revoked and replaced with an amended Rule 1 that defines the legal name of the Society, recognises the popular name of Birds New Zealand, and defines a Te Reo Māori name of the Society.

"1. NAME

The legally registered name of the Society shall be The Ornithological Society of New Zealand Incorporated. The popular operating name for the Society shall be Birds New Zealand. The Te Reo Māori name of the Society shall be Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa."

A background paper with an explanation has been posted on the Society's website:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Notices-of-Motion-Society-Name-for-2021-AGM.pdf>

IAN ARMITAGE/BRUCE MCKINLAY

Notice of Motion: Change to Society Subscriptions

In terms of Rule 6.1 of the Society's Constitution, I give Notice of Motion to members on behalf of Council that the rate of subscriptions for all classes of Society Memberships be amended. The present and proposed amended subscription rates are as follows. (Note: Life subscriptions are paid once for the life of the subscriber. Other subscriptions are annual payments).

A. New Zealand Membership Subscriptions (\$)						
Category	Ordinary	Family	Student	Group	Corporate	Life
Present Rate	70.00	17.50	35.00	140.00	350.00	1,380.00
Proposed Rate	80.00	20.00	40.00	160.00	400.00	1,580.00
% Change	14.3	14.3	14.3	14.3	14.3	14.5

B. Membership Subscriptions for the Rest of the World (\$)						
Category	Ordinary	Family	Student	Group	Corporate	Life
Present Rate	115.00	28.75	57.50	225.00	690.00	2,400.00
Proposed Rate	134.00	33.50	67.00	262.50	805.00	2,800.00
% Change	16.5	16.5	16.5	16.7	16.7	16.7

A background paper with an explanation has been published on the Society's website: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Notice-of-Motion-Change-to-Society-Subscriptions-for-2021.pdf>

BRUCE MCKINLAY/PAUL GARNER-RICHARDS

2021 Birds New Zealand Youth Camp

The 2021 Birds New Zealand Youth Camp will be held in the Napier area of Hawke's Bay from 18th to 24th April. The programme for the camp has been posted online here: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Birds-NZ-Youth-Camp-2021-Program.pdf>

The annual Youth Camp is a fantastic opportunity for young participants to develop basic birding skills and get hands-on experience with birds. If you are a student aged between 14 and 18 years-old and are keen to join this Youth Camp, please contact the organisers by email: youthcamp@birdsnz.org.nz

Call for applications to the 2021 Birds New Zealand Research Fund

Applications to the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2021 open on 1st April 2021 and must be received by 15th June 2021. This important national research fund is managed by Birds New Zealand on behalf of T/GEAR Charitable Trust. Applications will be accepted from individuals, students, researchers within universities, or organisations prepared to make a difference through ornithological research, with outcomes likely to provide for better management of New Zealand birds or their environment. The applicant has to be a current member of Birds New Zealand, living in New Zealand, and the project carried out in New Zealand or its outlying islands (e.g. Subantarctic Islands).

Funding ranging from \$1,500 to \$10,000 may be awarded. This fund provides financial assistance for logistics and purchase of equipment and consumables - it does not fund salaries or wages. For smaller projects refer to the Society's Projects Assistance Fund. Payments will be funded retrospective (either after submission of the interim or final project report) and are for a 12-month period only. In the event of financial hardship, exemptions may be made after prior consultation. Preference will be given to applications that will:

- involve research into native species;
- involve research with a measurable outcome and a commitment to have results published;
- involve people learning as well as being involved;
- demonstrate intent to publish at least part of the funded work in the Society's journal, *Notornis*
- lead to results that will clearly be of benefit to the conservation of New Zealand birds;
- involve research on "Preferred Student Research Topics" (for student research projects).

Applications must be received by 15th June 2021 on the official application form provided on the Society's website (<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/funding/birds-nz-research-fund/>) and submitted as a single PDF file. For queries, please contact Executive Officer Ingrid Hutzler: eo@birdsnz.org.nz

Level 3 operators – Backbone of the Banding Scheme

The NZ National Bird Banding Scheme (NZNBBS) is made up of a dedicated, thriving banding/marketing community which has 900 registered operators certified at one of three different levels of competency for capture and marking of birds and bats. Of this group, the Scheme is fortunate to have 324 Level 3 experts. A third of Level 3 experts are members of Birds New Zealand.

The Level 3 experts have extensive experience in capture methods and species groups, and are responsible for training, supervision, ordering of bands, data submission, and ensuring that relevant permits are in place. Attaining Level 3 certification carries a lot of responsibility so the bar is set quite high, with a panel of twelve experts – the Banding Advisory Committee (BAC) – providing advice on appropriate certification levels based on evidence of competency.

People operating at Level 3 are vital for a well-functioning banding scheme in terms of the extensive knowledge that they share and pass on to other banders, and the role modelling they provide in working to the Code of Conduct and the NZNBBS Bird Bander's Manual Best Practice Guidelines. The NZNBBS is very appreciative of the Level 3 experts that take the time to mentor up-and-coming banders, provide training within their own research projects, and stand aside for trainees to have the opportunity to band birds when they themselves would like to band.

The Banding Office would like to extend sincere thanks to the Level 3 experts, the backbone of our Banding Scheme!

MICHELLE BRADSHAW, BIRD BANDING OFFICE



North Island Saddleback/Tieke by Kay Milton/NZ Birds Online.

North Island Tieke song variability

The North Island Saddleback or Tieke is arguably New Zealand's most successfully translocated species. On the other hand, it is an exceptional carrier of endemic and introduced avian malaria caused by *Plasmodium* spp, with seroprevalence between 10-40% at different translocation sites. From previous studies in the species, we have learned that serial translocations have resulted in cultural bottlenecks with reduction of song variability, which has important implications for behavioural evolution (as males use their song to attract females). However, little is known about how parasite infection may affect song expression and behaviour in the species.

With funding from the 2019 Birds New Zealand Research Fund we investigated whether Tieke in a translocated population (Bushy Park Sanctuary) with a high *Plasmodium* seroprevalence (39%; Schöener 2016) show different behavioural patterns, and if there exists a relationship between these and parasitic infection and/or complexity of song. One of our team's goals was to minimise the welfare costs to wild birds in our research.

To achieve this goal, we measured behaviour while handling the bird to collect blood samples and other information, instead of the more common tests that require caging birds. To determine the *Plasmodium* infective status and the parasitic load, we screened blood samples using real-time PCR testing. Our *Plasmodium* prevalence level was 40% like that of Schöener (2016).

Using DNA sequencing, we detected five lineages of *Plasmodium* sp. with mixed infection found in only four samples. We collected song recordings from the individuals we caught using a handheld recorder and microphone. Initial analysis using behavioural information revealed at least four main behavioural groupings in our birds, but we did not find a significant relationship between these groups and being infected with *Plasmodium*. However, we found that birds positive for *Plasmodium* showed increased struggle behaviour during handling and we also found a positive association between struggling at handling and the number of parasites in the blood, especially in males. Infected females were quicker to accept an offering of sugar water after manipulations, suggesting that the parasite may affect them by making them more risk prone.

These findings are important because struggling is part of escape behaviour in birds, which would increase the likelihood of individuals escaping from predators, but also benefit the parasite by increasing its transmission opportunities. Risk-taking will affect the survivorship of birds as well, but this behaviour may have positive or negative consequences for survival. Behavioural changes such as the ones we found have been reported in other species of bird elsewhere in the world. These findings could be utilised for translocation purposes by, for example, selecting infected males and uninfected females which could arguably result in better post-release survival. The next step in our research will be to evaluate the effect of the avian malaria status on the song characteristics.

ISABEL CASTRO, MASSEY UNIVERSITY

Satellite tracking Bar-tailed Godwits

International migratory shorebirds have been widely documented to be declining, including in New Zealand. Bar-tailed Godwits/Kuaka from New Zealand have a prolonged stopover in one of the most threatened areas globally for shorebirds, the coasts of East Asia including the Yellow Sea. There, extensive land-claim, along with site-specific food declines, may be threatening the ability of birds to refuel successfully on migration.

With funding from the 2019 Birds New Zealand Research Fund we embarked on a satellite-tracking project of godwits from Pūkoro-Miranda near Auckland, to better understand their habitat use and movements while staging in Asia (map below). The plan was to feed real-time information to colleagues in Asia in order to target on-ground research activities. Of course, Covid-19 halted field activities during the migration season in Asia but incredible insights into migration were gained from the tracking.

Perhaps most notably, all legs of the migrations were affected at times by very unfavourable wind conditions. Several tracked birds were beset by headwinds on the way to Asia, including from a cyclone off eastern Australia and through strong winds blocking the mouth to the Yellow Sea. In an extreme example, one bird was 2,500 km into its flight when it hit the cyclone, which it fought for a day, then gave up and bailed to fly back to Pūkoro-Miranda – 6,000 km of flight, taking a week, only to be back where it had started from. We presumed that was it for the year for that bird so were astonished when two weeks later that it took off again and flew direct to the Yellow Sea!

Between Asia and Alaska one bird got stuck beneath a low-pressure system that was tracking across the Pacific Ocean and was unable to head northwards towards the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Instead it traversed the entire North Pacific Ocean and eventually landed just past the Canadian border in south-east Alaska. After backtracking to the breeding grounds, it had covered 12,000 km rather than the 6,500 km a direct flight should have taken.

Finally, persistent easterly airflows restricted the abilities of several birds to migrate directly from Alaska to New Zealand, and stop-offs in Melanesia (New Caledonia and New Ireland) and Australia reinforce the importance of islands as emergency drop-out sites for migrants.

Some birds did make it back to New Zealand directly, generating considerable news media coverage. The long-standing endurance flight distance record set by godwit 'E7' in 2007 (which is in the Guinness Book of World Records) was broken twice in one weekend, with one bird being tracked flying about 12,200 km. Of course, long flights are easier with wind assistance, and the physiologically even more impressive achievement may be a bird that flew for over ten days non-stop before reaching New Zealand.

In addition to learning much about godwit migration, we also discovered how news can spread on the internet. A well-written article in The Guardian was quickly deconstructed and reconstructed globally, with translation gems such as "The angel left Alaska on 1st September after feeding the baby or worms for two months" and "Fully raised bar-powered deities range in length from 37 cm to 39 cm".

With tags from eight birds still transmitting we hope to continue monitoring these migrations in 2021, so please keep your eyes on the tracking website: <https://www.globalflywaynetwork.org/flyway/east-asian-australasian-flyway/map>

PHIL BATTLETT & DAVID MELVILLE

Ministerial letters of congratulation

After the 2020 election, President Bruce McKinlay and Vice-President Ian Armitage sent letters of congratulation on behalf of the Society's Council and membership to the new Minister of Conservation, Hon Kiritapu Allan, and to the Minister of Research, Science and Innovation, Hon Dr Megan Woods.

The letters introduced both ministers to the Society, describing our varied work, branches, publications, funding of new research and scholarships, and collaboration with other voluntary organisations in NZ and Australia.

The letters noted that, "Valuable information is being accumulated by Society members through several national and regional research programmes. An ambitious five-year project (2019–2024) aims to map the distribution and abundance of our birds; it is entitled the New Zealand Bird Atlas. This atlas will provide the first comprehensive statement of the status of New Zealand bird species for 20 years."

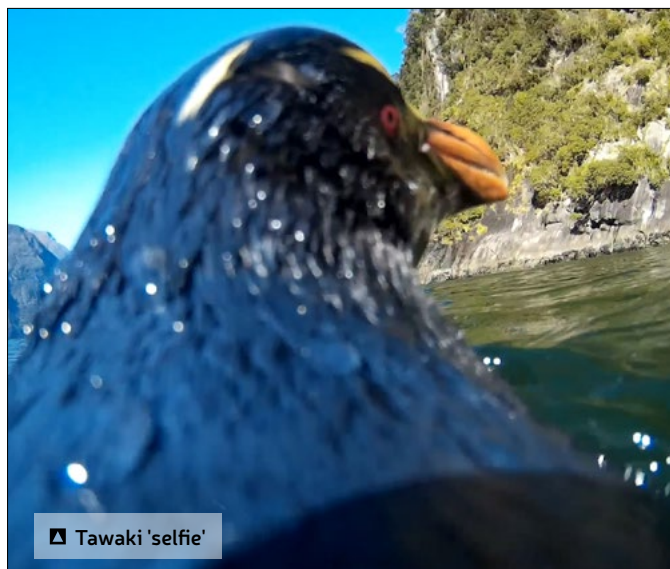
They also explained that, "Although Birds New Zealand is not a conservation society, evidence-based information about birds published by its members is often provided and used for conservation planning purposes. ... When it is appropriate to do so the Society makes submissions on matters of concern, both nationally and to territorial and regional local authorities. Recent examples are submissions made on a Proposed National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity and on a Proposed Extinct Species Trade Regulations discussion document."

They then invited the ministers to discuss any aspects of our work and identify topics where we could provide knowledge to support the implementation of research and conservation policy and programmes.



▲ Hon Kiritapu Allan photo by Ailsa McGilvary-Howard.





▲ Tawaki 'selfie'

Tawaki habitat use in fjord ecosystems

The Tawaki/Fjordland Crested Penguin is the world's most elusive penguin species. Its breeding range is confined to the southern coastline of Westland, Fiordland, and islands in Foveaux Strait as well as Rakiura/Stewart Island. Despite this relatively restricted range, Tawaki occupy highly diverse marine habitats ranging from continental shelf settings in South-Westland, fjord ecosystems inside and open deep waters outside the Fiordland boundaries, and shallow coastal habitat in Foveaux Strait.

Since 2014, the Tawaki Project has been studying the foraging ecology of Tawaki and found the species' at-sea behaviour to be as versatile as the marine environments it occupies. Particularly, dive behaviour varied substantially in penguins from Milford Sound/Piopiotahi when compared to conspecifics breeding along open coastlines. Dive profiles indicated that their strategy was to dive to a depth of about 20-30 metres after which the penguins would gradually dive along a surface-ward trajectory before ascending steeply at the end of the dive. These dive patterns suggested that penguins were searching and approaching their prey from below, presumably aided by the light backdrop of the surface.

To examine their prey pursuit behaviour as well as get the first information about prey species targeted by Tawaki within Milford Sound/Piopiotahi we deployed novel animal-borne video cameras on chick-rearing Tawaki. This was funded by the 2019 Birds New Zealand Research Fund. Logistical constraints due to inclement weather conditions allowed only two camera deployments in September/October 2020. Whereas one camera malfunctioned, the second deployment yielded a total of 2.5 hours of video footage documenting a total of 56 prey capture events. Of these, 52 captures were of fish larvae; the penguin also captured two Warty Squid (*Moroteuthopsis ingens*) and two sprats (*Sprattus muelleri*) while the camera was operating.

As suspected, the penguin's prey pursuit strategy was in all cases from below. Fish larvae were generally caught without a notable prey pursuit (i.e., "drive-by capture") whereas squid and sprat involved some chasing before successful capture. After this successful pilot study, we plan to deploy cameras on chick-rearing Tawaki in the coming years. We plan to compare feeding strategies of penguins known to forage predominantly inside fjords (e.g. penguins from Harrison Cove, Milford Sound/Piopiotahi; Seymour Island, Doubtful Sound/Patea) and birds searching for prey in the open sea (Moraine, Milford Sound; Shelter Islands, Doubtful Sound).

THOMAS METTERN, OTAGO UNIVERSITY/TAWAKI PROJECT

Great Spotted Kiwi acoustic monitoring

Passive acoustic monitoring is increasingly used to monitor changes in kiwi populations and their response to conservation management. Great Spotted Kiwi/Roroa were reintroduced to the Nina Valley near Lewis Pass from the Hawdon Valley (Arthurs Pass) between 2011 and 2015. Thus far, this project was the only reintroduction attempt of Roroa in the Arthur's Pass-Hurunui region. Therefore, it was necessary to assess the reintroduction outcome and possible impacts of removing birds from the source population.



We used baseline data from acoustic surveys in 2012-13 from both areas and repeated the surveys in 2017-18. We deployed 21-23 recorders for three weeks in the centre of probable kiwi territories in each valley, about one kilometre apart. Subsequently, we analysed the acoustic data using Kaleidoscope software for automated call detection with an additional manual confirmation.

The analysis of acoustic data yielded some interesting results. In the Nina Valley, only 14% of devices recorded kiwi in 2012. These were three sites around the area where the first subadult kiwi were released between 2011-12. The proportion of recorders detecting kiwi increased rapidly to 68% in the 2017 survey. This increase was likely a result of the successful establishment of the reintroduced population, which was further expanded by releasing more subadults and four pairs of adults from the Hawdon Valley by 2015. These birds spread throughout the valley, established territories, and - based on previous radio-telemetry monitoring - some started breeding.

Kiwi in the Nina were calling only infrequently, and it took up to ten nights for a bird to be recorded at a listening site, which resulted in estimated low detection probability. Therefore, single-season occupancy models estimated true site occupancy at 20% and 72% in 2012 and 2017, respectively. These results indicate that several sites had kiwi present, but we did not detect them, and therefore such estimates are higher than naïve occupancy based on simple detection/non-detection data. A multi-season occupancy model estimated that there was a 67% probability that unoccupied sites in 2012 became occupied by 2017.

In the Hawdon Valley, 65% of recorders detected kiwi in the 2012 survey, and the proportion of devices detecting kiwi increased up to 90% by 2017. That was despite removing four pairs of adult birds from their territories in 2015. This increase was likely a result of the successful recruitment of adults and strong population growth, which benefited from intensive predator management. Because of a much higher number of calls in the Hawdon, and higher detectability, the estimates of true occupancy were more similar to naïve occupancy. Single-season occupancy models estimated true site occupancy in the Hawdon at 65% and 93% in 2012 and 2017, respectively. A multi-season occupancy model estimated that there was a 70% probability that unoccupied sites in 2012 became occupied by 2017. At least three out of the four territories, where birds were removed in 2015, were re-occupied by the time of the 2017 survey. These territories were all occupied by both a male and a female, indicating a little impact of removing the birds from the donor population in the Hawdon Valley. This project was funded by the 2019 Marj Davis Scholarship.

PETER JAHN



▲ Black Stilt/Kaki, Tasman River Delta, Canterbury. Photo by Michael Szabo.



▲ Male Rifleman/Titipounamu at nest entrance in crevice at the base of Mt Cook Memorial, Canterbury (4/2/21). Photo by Michael Szabo.



▲ Wrybill/Ngutuparore, Cass River by Lake Tekapo, Canterbury. Photo by Michael Szabo.



▲ Black-fronted Tern/Tarapiroe, Rangitata River, Canterbury. Photo by Michael Szabo.

NZ Bird Atlas Summer 2020/21

This summer has seen some fantastic Atlasing across the country. Checklists have been submitted across New Zealand, including offshore islands such as Auckland, Antipodes, Campbell and the Chatham Islands receiving data. Atlasers in Canterbury, Auckland and Waikato are leading the charge so far with nearly 4,000 effort hours between them for the summer season. This forms part of the 11,142 hours of Atlasing undertaken for the cumulative summer period so far, and the 39,600 hours given by the Atlas community so far for the entire Atlas project. This equates to 1,650 days!

At the time of writing, we currently have over 28,000 complete checklists for the cumulative summer total, with a whole month still left to raise this number even further. Last summer, the Atlas community submitted over 13,500 checklists and we can see that the coverage has also grown; 62.5% of all 3,232 grid squares have now received at least one complete checklist during summer.

That represents only a chunk of the 105,500 complete checklists that have been submitted by the Atlas community since 1st June 2019. This is an incredible amount of time, effort and data collated already, with 41 months still left of the entire project. What is even more amazing is this tally takes the overall NZ *eBird* checklist tally (for all years both before and during the Atlas) over the 250,000 mark! Thank you so much to everyone who has contributed to the Atlas project, together we are all rapidly collating an impressive dataset.

In terms of the number of species detected, Southland has had the greatest number (143), followed by Canterbury (141), and Auckland (133). Finally, 497 Atlasers have so far contributed to the collective summer effort, representing an increase from last year. This is something we are keen to continue, so please do keep spreading the word about the Atlas; the more people we can get involved, the better coverage we will get and the better the Atlas dataset will be!

NZ BIRD ATLAS TEAM (DAN, PAT, MIKE AND SAM)

Atlas challenges

Atlas challenges are continuing, with bi-monthly challenges set and a new prize up for grabs. Bay of Plenty Regional Representative Paul Cuming was the winner of the December 2020 NZ Bird Atlas challenge. Paul's name was drawn randomly from the Atlasers who submitted checklists to at least 10 Atlas grid squares in December and he was the winner of a New Zealand Bird Atlas t-shirt. Paul submitted data to a total of 17 grid squares in the month of December which was a fantastic effort.

The February Atlas challenge will see one lucky Atlaser win a signed copy of Oscar Thomas's new book, *A Naturalist's Guide to the Birds of New Zealand*. To qualify for the draw, all you have to do is submit 28 or more complete checklists to the Atlas during the month of February. These checklists must include counts for every species reported (no X's!) and should follow the best practices outlined on the Atlas Essentials page.

A Naturalist's Guide to the Birds of New Zealand is a brilliant book. Oscar has for many years spent time volunteering for conservation organisations and traversing the country in search of as many different birds as he could see and photograph.

Oscar is also an avid Atlaser himself, often submitting beautifully illustrated checklists to *eBird* with his photography. We're grateful to him for kindly donating a signed copy of his new book as the prize for this challenge and for being part of the awesome NZ Atlasing community.



▲ Tarapiroe feeds chick/M Szabo.



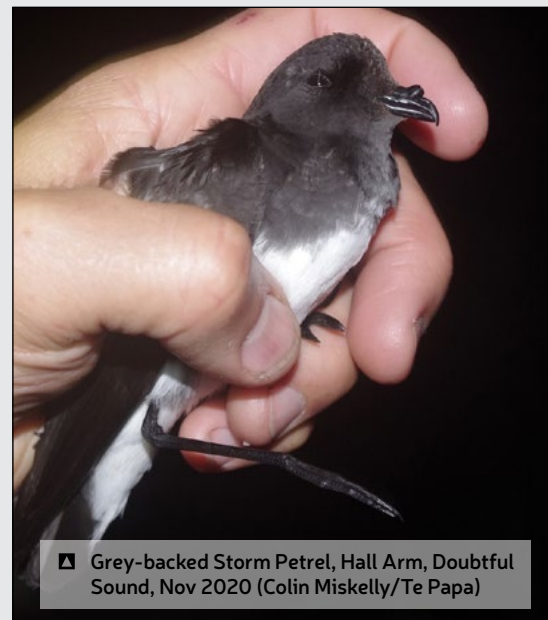
▲ Two Grey-backed Storm Petrels/Reoreo, Anita Bay, Milford Sound/Piopiotahi, November 2020 (Jean-Claude Stahl/Te Papa)



▲ Grey-backed Storm Petrel in spotlight (Jean-Claude Stahl/Te Papa)



▲ Spotlighting from Southern Winds (Jean-Claude Stahl/Te Papa)



▲ Grey-backed Storm Petrel, Hall Arm, Doubtful Sound, Nov 2020 (Colin Miskelly/Te Papa)

Fiordland Storm Petrels in the Spotlight

By Colin Miskelly

Te Papa and Department of Conservation staff have undertaken a series of expeditions since 2016, searching for and counting nesting seabirds on more than 200 islands throughout Fiordland, most recently on a boat-based survey of islands in central and northern Fiordland in November 2020.

One of the species that we have focused on is New Zealand's smallest seabird, the Grey-backed Storm Petrel/Reoreo. None have ever been found breeding anywhere near the New Zealand mainland, but we now have overwhelming evidence that they probably breed at scattered sites throughout Fiordland.

The technique we use when searching for these storm petrels is spotlighting at night. Many species of seabirds return to

their breeding grounds under the cover of darkness. For largely unknown reasons, they are attracted to bright lights, particularly on dark and misty nights.

We encountered three Grey-backed Storm Petrels in Dusky Sound in 2016, prompting us to prepare and publish a summary of at least 21 birds observed or collected in Fiordland between 1889 and 2016. We saw at least five more birds in Chalky and Preservation Inlets in 2017, including capturing a bird with a bare brood patch (this bare skin on the belly allows transfer of body heat to the egg, and is a sure sign that the bird is breeding).

A year later, I chanced on the remains of a Grey-backed Storm Petrel while walking the Routeburn Track (yes – I have a small



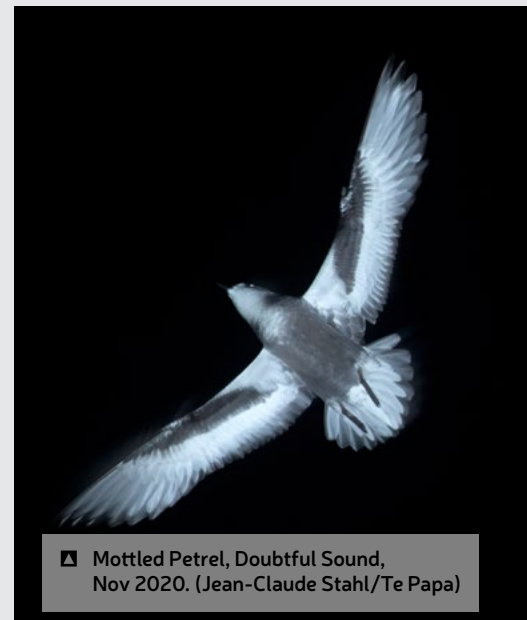
▲ Mottled Petrel/Korure photo by Jake Osbourne.



▲ Grey-backed Storm Petrel with bare brood patch, Chalky Inlet, Nov 2017 (Alan Tennyson/Te Papa)



▲ Post Office Rock, Milford Sound (Jean-Claude Stahl/Te Papa)



▲ Mottled Petrel, Doubtful Sound, Nov 2020. (Jean-Claude Stahl/Te Papa)

issue with work-life balance!). However, we failed to see a single storm petrel during a survey of islands in Breaksea and Dusky Sounds in 2019 – the moon was full and skies were clear, making conditions hopeless for spotlighting.

We had high expectations of encountering storm petrels on our latest visit to Fiordland, as we were there during a dark moon phase. Our itinerary also had us covering a lot of ground, from Milford Sound south to Dagg Sound, about 120 km apart. However, what we found exceeded all expectations.

We encountered Grey-backed Storm Petrels at all six sites where we moored or anchored, including an astonishing seven birds at the entrance to Milford Sound (two captured, with another five visible at once). Storm petrels were present both near the open sea, and at the furthest inland where it is possible to travel by boat, at the head of Hall Arm, Doubtful Sound.

The most remarkable encounter occurred just before dawn on the final morning of the survey. We were anchored at the head of Hall Arm, 27 km from the sea over the mountain tops, and 40 km by water. I am an early riser, and was entering survey data into a spreadsheet in the dark. The door to the rear deck was open, and at 5.35am a storm petrel flew in – apparently attracted by the bright screen of my laptop. The first I knew was when the bird hit me in the chest!

To add to the intrigue, the bird had a fully bare brood patch. The likely explanation is that it had just completed an incubation shift and had flown down from the surrounding mountains to sea level, before heading out to the outer coast before dawn. We suspect that storm petrels have survived in Fiordland by breeding on ledges on cliffs, inaccessible to rats and stoats. Our sightings suggest they are spread across the length and breadth of a vast landscape. But will anyone ever find a nest?

Surveying breeding seabirds in Fiordland

A quick look at a map of the coastal Fiordland region shows 50 named islands and another 22 named clusters. There are 18 islands in the appropriately-named 'Many Islands' in Dusky Sound alone. And then there are all the unnamed islands, islets, and rock stacks.

Any island large enough to have rock crevices or soil (for burrowing) could provide a breeding site for petrels. The three most abundant and widespread petrel species in Fiordland are Sooty Shearwater (Titi), Broad-billed Prion (Pararā) and Mottled



▲ Tawaki/Fiordland Crested Penguins on an unnamed island in Poison Bay, November 2020 (Colin Miskelly/Te Papa)



▲ This unnamed island in Dagg Sound had an estimated 2,800 Sooty Shearwater burrows (Jean-Claude Stahl/Te Papa)



▲ Sooty Shearwater/Titi chick (Colin Miskelly/NZ Birds Online)

Petrel (Korure). Finding their colonies has also been a focus of our Fiordland expeditions since 2016.

The seabird surveys started in Dusky Sound (which is rumoured to have an island for every day of the year), then moved to the nearby island-rich fiords of Chalky Inlet, Preservation Inlet, and Breaksea Sound. By early 2020 we had completed surveys of 175 islands in southern Fiordland, and so we shifted our gaze further north.

The remaining section of the Fiordland coast has about 125 km of coastline, from Dagg Sound north to Milford Sound. A feature of Fiordland is that as you get north, the mountains get higher, the sides of the fiords get steeper, and there are fewer islands. The northernmost fiord of Milford Sound (Piopiotahi) is famed for its spectacular scenery.

The only island in the outer fiord (Post Office Rock) is an infinitesimal speck among this grandeur, yet we found 73 Sooty Shearwater burrows there.

We started the survey at Deep Cove in Doubtful Sound, and immediately headed north to Milford Sound, to make the most of a few days of settled weather. As we worked our way south, one of the highlights was landing on an unnamed island in Poison Bay, just south of Milford Sound.

Not only was it an important Tawaki (Fiordland Crested Penguin) breeding site, but we also found Broad-billed Prions breeding there, more than 50 km north of where they were known to occur in Fiordland.

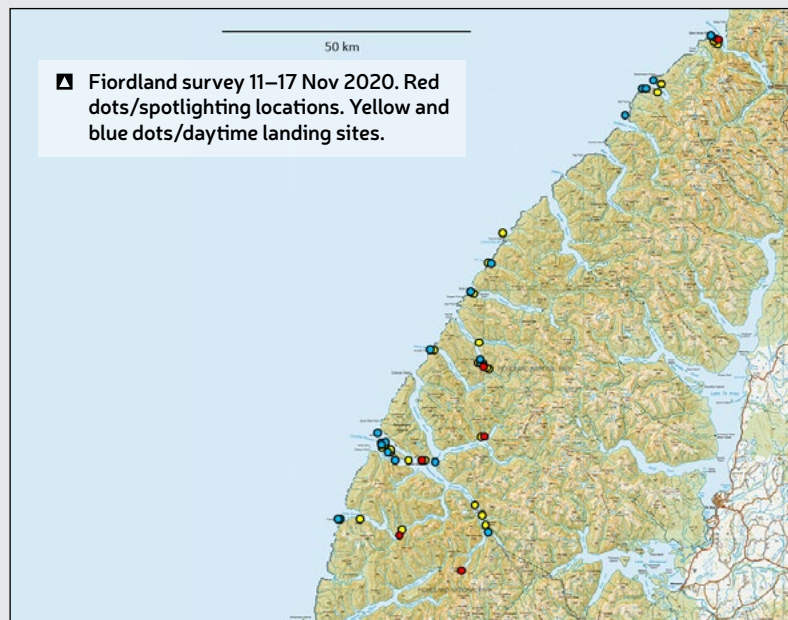
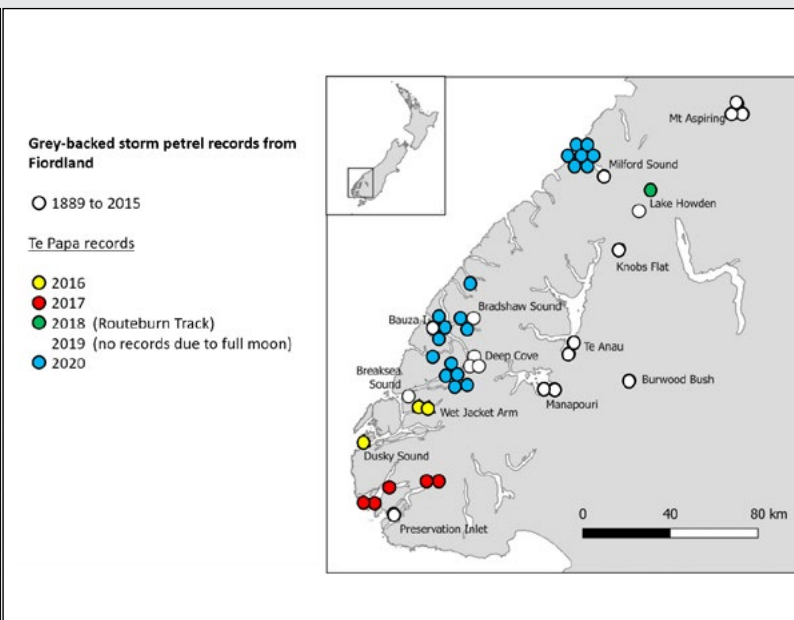
A few days later we discovered another range extension, with about 50 Mottled Petrel burrows (and two corpses) on Seymour Island in Doubtful Sound - the first report of this species breeding north of Breaksea Sound in recent times.

Most of the islands in northern Fiordland do not receive any pest control, and are close to the mainland, and so it was not a surprise to find evidence of rat presence. This included footprints, droppings, and gnawed seabird corpses.

However, we were very surprised to find rats to be present on Nee Island, off the south-west corner of 8,140-hectare Secretary Island, at the entrance to Doubtful Sound.

Secretary Island is the largest island near mainland New Zealand that has never had rats or mice establish. It is also the site of a major island restoration project by DOC, with Red Deer eradicated, and an extensive network of Stoat traps maintained three to four times a year. Nee Island lies only a few hundred metres offshore, which is far too close for comfort.

▲ Broad-billed Prion/Pararā chick, unnamed island
Poison Bay, Nov 2020 (Alan Tennyson/Te Papa)



Within 12 days of our visit, DOC staff had returned to Nee Shelter Island, had used traps and trail cameras to confirm the presence of Norway Rats, and had hand-spread brodifacoum bait to eradicate the rats.

One of my personal highlights was landing on western Shelter Island, at the entrance to Doubtful Sound. I last visited the island (as a DOC scientist) in July 1993, as part of a Weka genetic sampling project.

The Weka on the Shelter Islands are mainly the black morph (black is the predominant colour for Weka in coastal Fjordland). However, a few birds in 1993 had a mixture of black and white feathers, presumably due to a genetic mutation. My 1993 notes describe one bird caught on this island as having “about half the head and underparts white”.

I photographed an almost identical bird on the same island in November 2020, indicating the persistence of this genetic mutation in the population for at least 27 years.

We spent the last night of the survey at the head of Hall Arm, close to the Southern Winds’ home port of Deep Cove. There was only one island left to complete the survey – Rolla Island (0.8 ha) at the entrance to Hall Arm.

It was a great feeling to step ashore on this beautiful little island, knowing that we had managed to land on every island on our target list for the entire Fjordland coast over the course of the four surveys.

Before we started the surveys in 2016, there were only about a dozen Fjordland islands where petrels were known to breed, and no population estimates for any site.

After landing on 217 islands, we now know that there are at least 165 petrel colonies in Fjordland, and probably more than 66,000 breeding pairs. This is far more than anyone expected, and provides a great springboard for these populations to recover as rats and Stoats are cleared from more and larger islands, and from the adjacent mainland.

Colin Miskelly is vertebrates curator at Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand and a Council member of Birds New Zealand.

This article was previously published as two blogposts on Te Papa website: <https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2020/12/02/storm-petrels-in-the-spotlight/>
<https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2020/12/09/a-plethora-of-islands-surveying-breeding-seabirds-in-fiordland/>

True Young Explorers Scholarship

In February, Christchurch-based expedition cruise company Heritage Expeditions announced that they had awarded Oscar Thomas one of the company's True Young Explorers Scholarships.



▲ Oscar Thomas.

Oscar is a 20-year-old Dunedin ornithologist and photographer, and author of identification guide *A Naturalist's Guide to the Birds of New Zealand*.

The scholarship is an initiative to support a limited number of younger people (aged 18 - 30 years) each year who are passionate about giving a voice to, and protecting, New Zealand's Subantarctic Islands and Southern Ocean to experience expedition travel to Antarctica and Australia and New Zealand's Subantarctic Islands at a fraction of what it would otherwise cost.

An avid birder and photographer, and now an Ecology and Zoology student at Otago University, Oscar joined Heritage Expeditions' 7-day Auckland Islands and The Snares: Subantarctic Wonderland voyage in early February.

He said the opportunity to visit New Zealand's Subantarctic Islands with Heritage Expeditions would not only realise a long-held dream, but also further his studies and provide invaluable content for the second edition of his book.

"The opportunity to actually see Aotearoa as it would have been without disturbance or destruction is incomparable," he said. "The second edition will greatly benefit from additional photographs of our precious Subantarctic avifauna, subjects I have always dreamed of encountering. As a student I will also be furthering my study in the hopes to properly understand the state of our taonga, as well as make wider meaningful contributions to conservation in the future."

Heritage Expeditions' Commercial Director and Expedition Leader Aaron Russ said the company was delighted Oscar would be joining the voyage: "Heritage Expeditions was founded on the ideals of people like Oscar, he is a tenacious and talented young man who embodies our shared ethos, we can't wait to share New Zealand's precious Subantarctic Islands, and their incredible birdlife, with him."

Conservation Plan for Phoenix Petrel and Polynesian Storm Petrel

Birds New Zealand has supported the development of a Conservation Action Plan aimed at guiding recovery efforts for two endangered Pacific seabird species, Phoenix Petrel and Polynesian Storm-petrel (or White-throated Storm-Petrel). The project was funded by the 2020 Pacific Island Bird Conservation and Research Fund (PIBCRF).

The plan is a collaborative effort between in-country staff and agencies together with BirdLife invasive species programme manager Steve Cranwell, conservation scientists Ray Pierce (www.raypiercepacific.com) and Eric VanderWerf (eric@pacificrimconservation.org), and Birds New Zealand. The two species were grouped into one action plan because they share many breeding islands in common in the central Pacific and face many common threats.

Key objectives and actions in the plan include the monitoring of breeding populations and invasive predators at key sites, improving biosecurity, restoring habitat of former breeding islands, using translocations and social attraction to restore populations, researching biology and threats to help fill data gaps in guiding conservation efforts, raising local capacity and public awareness, and raising funds to achieve these objectives. Although invasive species are a key focal point where progress is being made, increasingly climate-change and other direct and ripple effects from human impacts need to be addressed.



▲ Common Diving Petrel/Kuaka photo by Les Feasey/NZ Birds Online.

Seabirds and artificial lights

Artificial lighting from buildings and shipping vessels can attract seabirds, causing disorientation, collisions (e.g. deck strike), and may cause seabird injury or death. In NZ waters alone between 2011-2016, circa 800 seabirds were caught as deck strike with 300 Common Diving Petrels reported in deck strike incidents (Holmes, 2017). For fishing vessels, seabirds are often also attracted to fish offal and fishing baits (Rodríguez et al., 2017). Interestingly, different seabird species have different rates of deck strikes, regardless of co-occurrence within the same area, or their relative abundances.

There is little research on why this happens, but it seems that species-level differences in seabird biology may be involved. Sensory ecology is a relatively novel field that can be used to understand seabird bycatch and deck strike. Seabirds have highly adapted and acute sensory systems for communicating and foraging that have evolved in response to their unique life history of colonial nesting, long-term pair bonds, and foraging and long-distance migration in an often featureless ocean (Haverkamp et al., 2018). The relative sensitivity of a seabird's sensory system could mean that some seabird species are more susceptible to deck strikes than others.

My research project explores seabird attraction to the lights, bait and chum of vessels operating in the Hauraki Gulf. A major element is lighting experiments on coastal beaches and vessels and measuring the attractiveness of the different type of lights for seabirds.

We used different types of LED lights including red, blue, green and white, as well as flood lights. These lights were set up on a wooden rack on open ground. Lights were shone in a pre-planned, randomised order each night. After sunset, each light was turned on for ten minutes, followed by intervals of zero lighting. The number of seabirds attracted towards each light, and their behaviours, were recorded using thermal recordings and visual observations between 9pm and 2am. The thermal camera was set up 60 metres from the light set-up and the observers were 30 metres away from the lights. These lighting experiments and observations occurred around coastal parts of the Hauraki Gulf including Te-Hauturu-O-Toi, Tiritiri Matangi Island and Tawharanui Peninsula on open flat ground.

This work is conducted in collaboration with the University of Auckland and the Northern New Zealand Seabird Trust with Chris Gaskin and Kerry Lukies, and the project was funded by the 2020 Birds New Zealand Project Assistance Fund.

ARIEL-MICAH HESWELL



▲ Juvenile Black-fronted Tern/Tarapiroe, Cass River.
Photo by Michael Szabo.



▲ Orange-fronted Parakeet/ Kākāriki Karaka photo by Michael Szabo.

Movements of Black-fronted Terns

Black-fronted Terns or Tarapiroe breed only in braided river systems of the South Island, where little is currently known about how far they range and their habitat use. Migration routes between their breeding colonies and coastal wintering sites are also currently unknown, making it difficult to provide a complete protection network for the terns. My study aims to fill these knowledge gaps through the use of GPS trackers, the first time they have been used to study Black-fronted Terns.

In November and December 2020, with the support of the Department of Conservation and the Birds New Zealand Project Assistance Fund, 34 terns were caught in colonies in the Ohau and Cass Rivers and fitted with Druid Technology GPS devices. These devices are fitted with a solar panel and use a Bluetooth/cellphone network system to upload their data all while weighing less than 3% of an adult Black-fronted Tern. So far the devices have been collecting movement data while the terns breed and are currently recording migration routes as the birds leave their colonies for the season. The information gained from this research will be used to inform a full, year-round protection network for the terns to better protect this unique and endemic species. Many thanks to the Birds New Zealand Project Assistance Fund 2020 for supporting this project.

FRASER GURNEY, LINCOLN UNIVERSITY

Social attractants tested for Black-fronted Terns

Social attraction techniques for species restoration and conservation projects mainly target colonial breeding species. Currently, predator control and habitat enhancement are the primary management strategies for improving populations of the endangered endemic Black-fronted Tern/Tarapiroe, which breeds in braided river habitats. Methods that increase the probability of Black-fronted Tern colonies being protected by management through an increase in site fidelity of breeding colonies may greatly increase effectiveness of management.

In a new study (*Social attractants, a conservation tool for Black-fronted Terns*), Courtney H. Hamblin, Adrian Paterson, James G. Ross, and Richard F. Maloney of Lincoln University in Canterbury (*Wildlife Society Bulletin*, Volume 43, Issue 3, Sept 2019: <https://wildlife.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/wsb.989>) deployed social attractants, decoys, and audio playback at ten sites within nine Canterbury braided rivers during September–December (2016 breeding season) to investigate whether they helped Black-fronted Terns nest at or near a chosen site.

The study found that terns interacted with the social attractants compared with the paired untreated plots that had no social attractants. Nearest locations of tern breeding were recorded for eight of the ten sites, with breeding recorded within 300 metres of the social attractant experimental plots at five of these sites. These results suggest that social attraction has the potential for use in Black-fronted Tern conservation by drawing breeding terns into habitat that has added predator or habitat management.

Young Kākāriki Karaka bolster wild population

Ten captive-raised juvenile Kākāriki Karaka (Orange-fronted Parakeet) were released into the Hurunui South Branch in Lake Sumner (Hoka Kura) Forest Park in February, bolstering the wild population. Department of Conservation field staff also found ten nests in the Hurunui South Branch, signalling a good breeding season was underway with more expected to be tracked down and monitored in coming months.

In the Poulter Valley in Arthur's Pass National Park, six eggs were retrieved from a nest and taken back to the Isaac Conservation and Wildlife Trust (ICWT) breeding facility in Christchurch. These will enhance the captive breeding programme's genetic diversity as the father is thought to be a wild bird from the valley.

This latest news came after 17 chicks in the ICWT breeding programme died from heat stress during unusually hot days in early February, when temperatures climbed to 37 degrees Celsius. The ICWT breeding facility currently has another 20 chicks in its nest boxes and 17 fledglings that will help to boost the wild population in the future.

Branded high visibility vests

Birds New Zealand has produced some lightweight branded high-visibility fluorescent 'safety vests' for use on field trips and at public events. The vests are available in size M and XL for \$12 plus postage. Each region has been sent two vests, and Regional Representatives can contact Executive Officer Ingrid Hutzler to order more.

The Auckland Branch recently bought ten for use during their guided bird walks, public events, beach patrols, and wader surveys. Regional Representative Ian McLean reports that they are fantastic: "I would encourage all regions to purchase some. Apart from clearly identifying our members at public events and being great for health and safety purposes on busy beach roads, they also have some unexpected advantages! Whilst wearing them during beach patrols and wader counts, at the sight of our fluoro vests, self-entitled dog owners have suddenly put their dog on the leash that it should have been on, and 4WD hooners have suddenly slowed down and driven away from the roosting flock of birds they were going to deliberately drive through!"

Birds New Zealand Vice-President Ian Armitage also reports that use of the new vests is supported by Wellington members making 5-minute bird counts on Kapiti Island recently: "I met a group of day visitors there who asked me about the Hihi and Kaka present at the time; I doubt if these questions would have been asked if a Birds New Zealand hi-vis vest wasn't being worn. One person went further and asked me what 'Birds New Zealand' was, and what the Society did. Perhaps a new member is on the way?"



▣ Ambury Park guided bird walk.

FAR NORTH

We had 2 successful Atlas field trips during the summer break plus a beach patrol in November. On our Pukenui Atlas trip some of us went up Mt Camel and others along the coast. The highlight was a family of Paradise Shelducks swimming in formation. Our other Atlas trip was around Waitangi where we saw a good variety of birds in coastal and estuary habitats, including a Royal Spoonbill. Further north, 10 Royal Spoonbills were reported in Houhora Harbour, and there were NZ Dotterels at Paihia, despite the crowds.

While sailing in the Bay of Islands over the summer we were pleased to record that a White-fronted Tern colony was once again breeding on the Black Rocks. There were also more Fluttering Shearwaters than we have seen for a few years, including a flock of about 250 birds.

We also had a very enjoyable family encounter. We have North Island Brown Kiwi in the bush behind the house. We have heard them calling intermittently over the years, usually the male. This year we heard a female a couple of times, then on 2/1 it called close to the house. On 3/1 she called loudly again, near the house. I went out and saw a dark mass making grunting noises and seemingly tumbling around. On closer inspection we saw 2 kiwi dancing around each other and putting their bills on each other's back, showing typical kiwi courting behaviour. They were completely oblivious to our presence nearby. This behaviour carried on for about 20 minutes then they wandered into the bush, the female finishing by giving a loud series of calls.

- ISABELLA GODBERT & LOIS WAGENER

NORTHLAND

Over the past couple of months several members carried out 5MBCs throughout urban Whangarei for Tiakina Whangārei, an initiative to protect biodiversity. The data will be used to investigate how species richness and abundance changes over the urban/forest gradient.

At our November meeting we had an online live lecture from Mel Galbraith who enlightened us about the Southern Black-backed Gull and its dietary habits in urban Auckland. We learned how their foraging habits have changed becoming reliant on city dump sites for food rather than foraging at sea and along the shore, and how these changing

behaviours are affecting breeding sites and numbers. Anne McCracken also hosted a lovely Christmas get together where branch members shared delicious food and bird-themed gifts!

Monitoring of Grey-faced Petrel continues on the Tutukaka coast where 16 of the 30 monitored burrows were active. No predators were detected in the vicinity so it is hoped that all 16 active burrows fledged young. At the same site, decoy gannets are finally attracting some action. A male gannet chose to make the spot home and scraped a hollow for a nest. On numerous occasions it was caught on a trail camera offering seaweed to decoys and on a couple of occasions, it attempted to mate with a decoy. Hopefully this bird finds a real mate next season and returns!

Scott Brooks organised two successful pelagic birdwatching trips from Tutukaka out past the Poor Knights Islands to the 'Petrel Station' area in December and January. Highlights included sightings of 26 Grey Ternlets, 21 NZ Storm Petrels, and an Arctic Skua catching a smaller seabird.

- ILSE CORKERY

AUCKLAND

Our Muriwai Beach Patrols were highly varied in numbers and species. We found 1 Little Black Shag on 7/11 and 7 different species on 5/12, including 1 White-capped Albatross and 1 Arctic Skua. Our 9/1 patrol found a total of 30 birds of 12 different species including 8 Buller's Shearwater, 2 Cook's Petrel and 1 Mottled Petrel, and our 6/2 patrol found 15 birds of 6 species including 6 Fluttering Shearwaters, and 1 Little Tern in non-breeding plumage.

The South Kaipara census on 14/11 recorded many Arctic and Asian migrants including 10,455 Bar-tailed Godwits, 6,521 Red Knot, 301 Ruddy Turnstone, 37 Pacific Golden Plover, 10 Whimbrel, 2 Red-necked Stints, and 20 Little Terns. Local birds included 4,824 SIPO, 52 Northern NZ Dotterel, 101 Royal Spoonbill, 205 Black-billed Gull, 210 Caspian Tern, 8 NZ Fairy Tern and 1 Pateke. The census of Waitemata Harbour on 15/11 found a total of 480 Bar-tailed Godwits, and the Mangawhai Census on 21/11 found 134 Northern NZ Dotterel, 3 Banded Dotterel, 205 VOC, 25 Ruddy Turnstone, and 13 NZ Fairy Tern.

Our new Birds New Zealand branded high-visibility fluoro vests were put to good use at a number of public events. A guided bird walk at Cornwall Park on 8/11 was well-attended by 30 numbers of the public. Birds seen included Helmeted Guineafowl and Ring-

necked Pheasants. An Ambury Park guided bird walk on 13/12 found a colony of circa 70 Black-billed Gulls breeding on the Radio Mast Peninsula.

An Avian Health Awareness event at Western Springs on 6/12 aimed to highlight the problems of people feeding bread to birds in the park. We found that most members of the public were completely unaware of the problems associated with feeding them with bread and were grateful for the advice. A birding highlight was 2 adult NZ Dabchicks with 3 chicks at this busy suburban park. Unusual sightings in the region included a Black-tailed Godwit seen by Ron Chew in Mangere on 15/1, and a Pectoral Sandpiper seen in the same location by Noel Ward on 16/1. An adult Sooty Tern was found at Onetangi Beach on Waiheke Island on 26/11 and taken into care at Native Bird Rescue. Unfortunately, the tern did not survive and was later delivered to the Auckland Museum as a specimen. Sanderlings were seen in 2 locations: 2 at Papakanui Spit on 1/11, and a singleton at Mangawhai found by Oscar Thomas on 10/1.

- IAN McLEAN

WAIKATO

At our October meeting, hosted by Andrew Styche, we watched a film on 'Shorebirds of Alaska', which Bruce Postill promptly declared "the best shorebird film I've ever seen."

Our November meeting saw a presentation on the work being undertaken by 'A Rocha Aotearoa' in the Raglan and Karioi areas. Kristel Van Houte has spoken to us before about the impressive work being undertaken by this Christian-based organisation which has three main goals: Practical Action, Education and Engagement, and Sustainable Communities.

In Whaingaroa/Raglan, A Rocha Aotearoa leads a community conservation project managing 2,000 hectares on a forested coastal mountain. Focused around intensive predator control, the project seeks to provide a safe habitat where seabirds can breed, thus restoring biodiversity to the forest. This work is described on their webpage.

Our Christmas meeting was an enjoyable evening at the Hamilton Gardens café. Atlas trips have been conducted over the past few months with dates for the new year already calendared.

A notable wreck of 134 juvenile/nestling gannets was recorded at Kawhia Beach, thought to be from Gannet Rock where a large number of gannets breed.

The second season of releasing North Island Brown Kiwi onto Maungatautari is now complete. Eighty three birds were released, bringing the total released on the mountain since October 2018 to 132. It is hoped that a further 75 will be released there this coming season.

Onemana Beach has had a bumper year for NZ Dotterel with 23 chicks hatched. Sadly, as is the norm with NZ Dotterel chicks where 80-90% die before fledgling, we have lost a number of them. At time of writing 4 have fledged and 4 are close to flying. A lot of work by the Dotterel Watch Team has improved awareness among the public, not just to the plight of the Northern NZ Dotterel but to all shorebirds.

- KEN WEDGWOOD



■ NZ Fairy Tern/Tara Iti, Manawatu Estuary, mid-Dec 2020/Imogen Warren.

TARANAKI

At our November meeting we were told that prior to doing repairs to rock walls around the New Plymouth coast, the council employed a dog and handler to check for Little Penguins and was amazed at the number of nesting or roosting birds found there. It appears that the birds can get deep enough into the rocks to avoid the dogs, surfers, and fishermen that use these areas, all of whom are probably oblivious to the birds around them. This prompted the council to reconsider how to go about repairs.

After earlier reports of a Fiordland Crested Penguin on a town beach, 2 members did some research and found 6 other records, including 1 of a bird that lived around the northern Taranaki coast for a couple of years before being hit by a car in 1981. An Erect-crested Penguin was also photographed on a South Taranaki beach in 1966.

November's field trip to Pukeiti recorded Shining Cuckoo, Whitehead, Bellbird, and Tui among other species. The café there is also an attraction to birders. Barry Hartley had a brief glimpse of a possible pair of Crimson Rosella when visiting Blue Rata reserve. A search by two others had a nil result.

A smattering of migratory waders have been seen around the coast with Bar-tailed Godwit, Lesser Knot and Ruddy Turnstone the most common, and a pair of Pacific Golden Plover spending their summer at Waiongana. Shorebird breeding has been variable along the coast, with a nil result for VOC and NZ Dotterel at Waiongana the most disappointing. The result was better at Sandy Bay. Members visiting there saw up to 14 adults and 5 fledglings of various sizes. Beach patrols have been quiet with little of interest found.

A fine warm morning in early December saw us at Balsom Reserve, a former quarry site beside the Waiwakaiho River just south-east of the city, the habitats included, residential, farmland, a river, and a pond. Twenty-one species were recorded including Coot, NZ Scaup, NZ Dabchick, Pied Stilt, numerous Eastern Rosella, and the usual introduced passerines, spoilt only by the sight of a family of 7 Stoats gambolling along the river edge opposite us. There was no 'Beach, Birds and BBQ' at home this year. - PETER FRYER

HAWKE'S BAY

In addition to our normal monthly field trips, we had a few extra activities that some local members participated in. Lynne Anderson organised an atlasing trip to the Rough Block bush at Cape Sanctuary in early November. Six members were kindly guided by John

Berry, who must have had a word to the birds before our arrival as we were treated to great views of 4 Shining Cuckoos, including interactions with Grey Warblers. We also had a fleeting glimpse of a Kākā and a couple of Red-crowned Kākāriki, and we heard plenty of NI Robins and NZ Tomtits, but sadly failed to see or hear the last remaining NI Saddleback in the reserve.

We held a joint "Meet the Godwits" event with the Ahuriri Estuary Protection Society which was attended by about 60 members of the public. A fascinating talk by Brent Stephenson was followed by observations at the 'Scrapes' area of the estuary, where everyone saw not only Bar-tailed Godwits, but also the Whimbrel that had been hanging around with them for a few months, plus the 'usual suspects'.

The other species reported in the previous roundup were not seen, but it seems to be luck of the draw as to which species are visible on any given day. In the past couple of months, up to 2 Pectoral Sandpipers, 5 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, 1 Marsh Sandpiper, 1 Ruddy Turnstone, and >650 Black-billed Gulls - including >100 chicks - in a nesting colony have been seen here.

At the end of January, 12 members braved an unseasonal cold southerly to revisit 1 of our wader census zones in the hope of seeing Australasian Bittern, which had been observed by RR Bernie Kelly a couple of weeks previously. Alas, none were in evidence, but we did see reasonably large flocks of Pied Stilts and domestic Greylag Geese, as well as 12 Royal Spoonbills.

Continued monitoring by DOC and Birds New Zealand members has recorded at least 16 Cook's Petrels at the translocation site in the Maungaharuru Range, up from the 8 reported previously. A Whimbrel was seen at Oraka-Maungawhio in Mahia in December, a Kākā was observed flying over Havelock North, and a Brown Booby has been seen several times with the Australasian Gannets at Black Reef (Cape Kidnappers). Several occupied Royal Spoonbill nests have been seen at the Horseshoe Wetland, including at least 5 chicks in 2 nests.

- THALIA SACHTLEBEN

MANAWATU

At our last meeting of 2020, Corey Mosen gave a beautifully illustrated overview of varied conservation work, with the added bonus of his now-retired Kea dog Ajax mooching around the room. We will be joining with Forest and Bird in February to hear Professor Alastair Robertson from Massey University talk about bird and insect pollination of flowers.

Bird-wise, the stand-out find of the summer has to have been a New Zealand Fairy Tern that visited the Manawatu Estuary in mid-December. Found and photographed initially by Imogen Warren, it was a 1-year old bird from Mangawhai in Northland, but it only stayed for a short period.

It has been a good summer for terns at Manawatu Estuary, with a Little Tern regularly seen there, along with a Common Tern, Black-fronted Tern, and the usual White-fronts and Caspians. The estuary has otherwise been fairly quiet, with only two Pacific Golden Plovers and occasional records

of Red-necked Stint and Ruddy Turnstone.

Inland, staff at Awastone, near Mangaweka, reported seeing a pair of SIPO on the Rangitikei River near the Whitecliffs Boulders for the last 5 seasons, with attempted breeding in at least the last 2. They run rafting and kayaking trips on the river so may be a useful way to atlas stretches of this long and difficult to access river.

In the Northern Ruahine Range, the January DOC/Ruahine Whio Protectors trap check was notable for finding another set of North Island Brown Kiwi footprints and a Kaka sighting, a species that is present in only very small numbers in the area. Kirsten Olsen has continued to organise monthly atlasing trips to specific squares around the region.

- PHIL BATTLE

WAIRARAPA

After a stuttering first half of 2020 we got out for quite a few expeditions in the second half. On a cold winter day, 5 of us set off to Palliser Bay and Cape Palliser. Our aim was to complete a series of Atlas counts on the way to and past the lighthouse. We found a shag-covered rock with 2 Spotted Shags plus Pied, Little Pied and Black Shags, Northern Giant Petrel offshore, a few VOCs, Pied Stilts, White-faced Heron, and various finches. By the end, we had added 11 lists to the Atlas.

Eight brave walkers gathered at Pukaha on a chilly morning with the aim of looping round on the top track. The tree cover being fairly dense forced our ears to do the birding with Bellbird, Whitehead, and NZ Tomtit identified among the trees. We also saw several Kereru and the familiar flitting of NZ Fantail with bonus birds heard being NZ Falcon and Kaka.

Our September trip was a well-attended planting and birding day at Pigeon Bush where it was good to see Tui, Bellbird and Kereru. Our September talk by Oliver Druce was entitled "Where do NZ birds come from?" The talk was a quick tour through the last 80 million years since NZ drifted away from Gondwana, looking at what we know and what we might guess about the origins of all our bird species.

Our November field trip was along the stopbanks surrounding Pounui Lagoons and Lake Onoke, courtesy of Dougal and Denise Mackenzie. The highlight was a motionless Australasian Bittern seen close-up. Several members joined the Wairarapa Moana Wader Survey in mid-December, which turned up a Spotless Crake. For some this was their first sighting of this secretive species!

- OLIVER DRUCE

WELLINGTON

The Wellington and Wairarapa regions continue to make major progress with the NZ Bird Atlas project, with 12,986 complete checklists lodged. While this translates to an impressive average of 124 checklists per square, there is still much work to be done and efforts are now turning to filling in gaps. These include atlas squares and habitats that have not been adequately surveyed and cryptic species which need to be specifically targeted.

For example, Spotless Crakes have only been observed in 5 of our 105 squares. Previous surveys and observations using playback calls indicate that they are



widespread in wetlands in our region. In 2017, Spotless Crake was recorded at the southern end of Kapiti Island at Wharekoku and more recently in the wetland at the north end of the island at Waiorua. The Waiorua Spotless Crake were first detected by Manaaki Barrett from the Lodge who reported seeing and photographing a chick with parents.

Interestingly, Spotless Crake was not recorded by the Wilkinsons during their 18 years on Kapiti (1924 to 1942). Spotless Crakes have also been recently reported from Lake Puketewhaino, Waikanae Scientific Reserve which is directly across the water from Kapiti Island. Marsh Crake are even more elusive and none have been recorded in an atlas checklist from our region. The closest recorded Marsh Crakes in the atlas from the North Island are from the Pekapeka and East Clive wetlands in Hawke's Bay.

- GEOFF DE LISLE

NELSON

The capricious White-fronted Terns didn't favour Motueka Sandspit this year as a breeding ground, but a colony with chicks was recorded on the Nelson Bounder Bank in late November close to the Red-billed Gull colony there. The Caspian Tern colony on the Waimea Estuary shellbanks got through the season without any high tide and wind washouts, and Willie Cook and his team banded 19 chicks there on 16/12. Reports came in of individual Gull-billed Tern sightings in the Waimea and Motueka estuaries. There were no reports of local Black-fronted Tern nesting but a lone Little Tern was spotted at Motueka Sandspit in late December.

Members at our first indoor evening meeting of the year shared their photos of birds 'from our holidays', with some great discussion between pics. Many stunning shots of avian action had been caught on camera including close-ups of interesting feeding activities and local birds not often seen such as Marsh Crake, Banded Rail, and NZ Dabchicks with young. Birds from further afield included a pair of Rifleman taking food to their young ones in a nest in a cavity near Mt Cook.

A total of 140 Ruddy Turnstones were recorded on Motueka Sandspit in late December along with 1,100 Bar-tailed Godwit, 120 Red Knot, 60 Banded Dotterel, plus SIPO, VOC, and a Whimbrel. Godwits and knots starting to turn rusty are feeding-up in preparation for their migratory flights back to their Arctic breeding grounds.

The small groups of Royal Spoonbills around our summer estuaries are swelling with compatriots from elsewhere to spend the winter in Golden and Tasman Bay coastal areas. No White Herons appeared to stay over summer within our region, but one was seen at Motueka Estuary in early February. NZ Scaup seem to be popping up on waterways all around the region, with many recently seen with ducklings. There was also confirmation of breeding by Australian Wood Ducks close to the Waimea Estuary. No Little Penguins have bred as yet in bespoke nesting boxes on Haulshore Island in Nelson Harbour, though they are known to frequent the harbour. Post-breeding SIPO have been moving around the country including GPS tagged birds, and there have been sightings of the orange-flagged

birds at Rabbit Island, (Waimea Estuary) and Riwaka. Banding and tagging of local VOCs continues.

- GAIL D. QUAYLE

CANTERBURY

Our last Canterbury field trip of the year, the summer wader count in November, was well attended by keen Canterbury members. During the count, a Northern Shoveler was seen by the Christchurch City Council Ranger team on the Kaiapo Oxidation Ponds. They also found a Common Greenshank in the Birdlings Flat B area of Lake Ellesmere which, despite the efforts of local birders, has not been seen since.

While 6 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers were spotted at Ki-Wainono Lagoon during the count, sandpiper numbers at Lake Ellesmere were low, with only 1 Curlew Sandpiper and 1 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper found. These were both seen at the Birdlings Flat A site. However, since then up to 6 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and 5 Pectoral Sandpipers have been found at the lake.

A Sanderling was spotted at the Ashley Estuary in November and has continued to be seen there since then. On the Ashley River itself, there seems to have been an increase in Black-fronted Dotterels, with 6 individuals being seen there. On the Rangitata River south of Christchurch, a White-winged Black Tern in breeding plumage was seen for a few days in mid-November but has not been seen since. At Travis Wetlands, a Cape Barren Goose has been regularly spotted for some time, and recently it has been joined by a second individual.

- ELEANOR GUNBY

OTAGO

Our Atlas field trip in December 2020 covered a range of habitats around Tautuku in the Catlins. These trips have been enjoyable and successful, and the first for 2021 was completed around Laurence. Summer is nearly over and as stated by Richard Schofield our Regional Recorder in our latest Branch newsletter, there are still plenty of Otago squares with little or no coverage, a hint for us to get out and about during the last half of February. To date through summer 2,319 checklists have been submitted with 119 species observed. Only 58% of squares have some data - lower than last spring. Have Otago members been too busy birding further afield over summer?

Bird sightings of interest include a Sacred Kingfisher in Dunedin City and Rainbow Lorikeets down the West Harbour (presumably escapees). When the local newspaper reported there were not many Little Owls in the area a flurry of letters said otherwise only a few days later. A Long-tailed Cuckoo was seen near Balclutha in December, a species now rarely recorded in eastern Otago.

Seabirds are busy breeding. The exceptionally heavy rains that welcomed the new year collapsed natural burrows at the mainland Fairy Prion colony on the cliff ledge at St Clair. About 30 protected juvenile and adult Red-billed Gulls at the Taiaroa Head colony (one of the few colonies that is increasing) were run over by people hooning

around in two cars and on a quad bike at the Royal Albatross Centre car park one night in February, demonstrating the appalling side of how some people treat native birds.

The Robins Beyond Orokonui project had a successful season with more nests found and observed, and more birds banded than previously. There was never a dull day out, with new nests found throughout the season including during the last trip. An interesting inside project is being led by Bruce McKinlay after having been given some detailed notebooks from Peter Schweigman with the observations kept by George and Doreen Grant during the 1980s and 1990s. These include records of the Taiari Plain Cattle Egrets and breeding Black-fronted Dotterel. The plan is to digitise the data and get it into eBird, showing the value of many records that must be held in countless old notebooks.

The final indoor meeting for 2020 was enjoyable with local member Karthic showing us some of his short bird films. We are looking forward to another year of interesting field trips and meetings in 2021.

- FRANCESCA CUNNINGHAME

SOUTHLAND

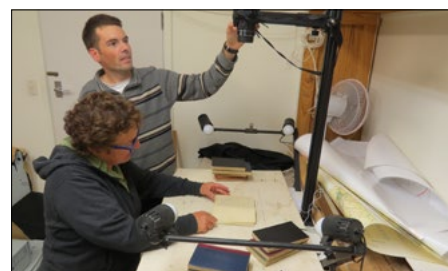
Awarua Bay turned up some interesting birds between October 2020 and January 2021, including Curlew Sandpiper, Greater Sand Plover, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Sanderling, and Terek Sandpiper. Among a flock of Red-necked Stint one bird was photographed with a yellow and blue band. This is the first banded stint on record for Southland.

Riverton's Jacob River estuary has been home to a Common Greenshank for several months, and we recently added Sanderling to the list there - a possible first sighting at this location. A Grey-tailed Tattler was also seen, and Sean Jacques spotted a Black-tailed Godwit and an Eastern Curlew at the New River Estuary shellbanks on 31/10.

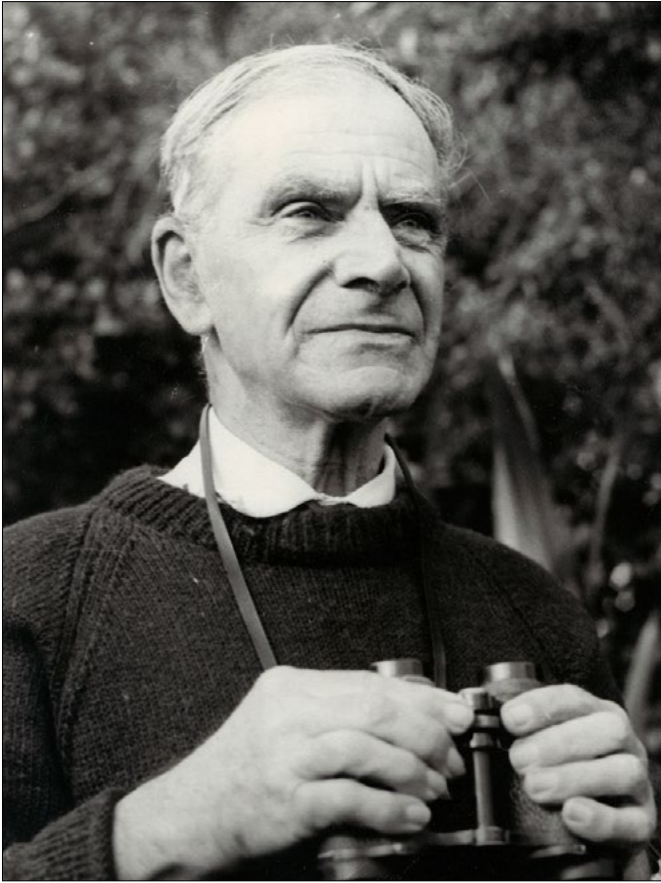
A pair of Black-fronted Dotterel were seen with two chicks on a gravel bank on the Oreti River on 10/12, with more sightings on the Maitara and Aparima rivers. Chestnut-breasted Shelduck continue to be reported from the Tip Lagoon on an irregular basis with a pair on 30/10 seen by Sean Jacques. He also saw a Little Black Shag on 4/11. A Little Tern was seen feeding with White-fronted Terns at Bluff on 10/11 and 12/11.

An Antarctic Fulmar was found alive, well inland at Wallacetown, but unfortunately it died later. Finally, a Whiskered Tern was found on the Upukerora River near Te Anau by a DOC staff member on 21/01, which was re-sighted on 27/01 by Igor Debski.

- PHIL RHODES



Joanna McVeagh and Nikki McArthur scanning pages from R.H.D. Stidolph's diary.



R.H.D. Stidolph's 100-year birding legacy

On New Years' Day 1921, a young Bob Stidolph opened the front cover of a new leatherbound notebook and on the first page inscribed the words "My ornithological diary - Volume 1". Whether he knew it then or not, with this small act the Wairarapa-based Stidolph began a life-long habit of keeping a near daily record of the birds that he encountered during his extensive travels throughout the Wairarapa, and the rest of New Zealand.

By the time he recorded his final diary entry on 27th June 1979, a mere six weeks before his death, his ornithological diaries spanned 14 volumes of meticulously-indexed notebooks, containing over 23,000 bird observations collected from 1,600 locations throughout New Zealand and beyond. With much of his birding activities concentrated near his hometown of Masterton, his notebooks now provide a unique and valuable record of the changes that occurred to the birdlife of the Wairarapa during the middle decades of the 20th Century.

Over nearly six decades of birding adventures, Stidolph travelled widely in his Austin 7, often with his family or birding associates. An avid nest-finder, family outings and picnics were frequently combined with nest-finding expeditions to locations such as the Ruamāhanga River (Banded Dotterel nests), Opaki (Swamp Harriers, Yellowhammers) and Te Whiti (Grey Warblers, Shining Cuckoos). Over the decades, Stidolph and his family and friends found themselves uniquely placed to document some of the changes occurring, including the local extinction of Fernbird at Lake Wairarapa, the concurrent rise and demise of Mallard and Grey Duck in the lower North Island, and the arrival and spread of colonisers such as Black-fronted Dotterels and Welcome Swallows.

One hundred years after Stidolph began compiling his unique ornithological diaries, his 14 volumes of meticulously kept records represent much more than an interesting piece of ornithological history. More significantly, they have the potential

to help us overcome, at least at a local level, Shifting Baseline Syndrome, a phenomenon that is being increasingly recognised as a fundamental obstacle inhibiting our ability to address pressing environmental issues such as halting and reversing the loss of biodiversity. Shifting Baseline Syndrome occurs when ongoing environmental degradation combined with a lack of access to information on historical environmental conditions leads each successive generation accepting a "new normal" of lowered expectations regarding the state of the natural environment. And when these lowered expectations occur among those people tasked with formulating conservation policy or managing natural habitats, it can lead to the passing of weaker environmental laws, or less ambitious ecosystem restoration targets.

One way to prevent Shifting Baseline Syndrome is to increase people's access to historical environmental information, in essence creating a new "normal" environmental baseline for our present generation to measure current and future environmental changes against. This is where Stidolph comes back into the picture. By leaving us a unique and highly detailed record of the early 20th Century distribution and abundance of birds, particularly in the Wairarapa, he has provided present-day conservation policymakers and managers in the region with a useful baseline that can be used to inform today's conservation efforts.

Fortunately for us, following his death in 1979, his notebooks made their way into the Wairarapa Archives in Masterton, where they remain. For much of following 35 years however, his notebooks lay unused - a valuable ornithological legacy being overlooked and underutilised. In 2015, Joanna McVeagh and I became aware of their existence, and with the help of Wairarapa Archivist Gareth Winter and support of Stidolph's daughter Sylvia, we embarked on a project to digitise the notebooks, entering all 23,000 of his bird observations into the New Zealand *eBird* database, a task which we completed in early 2021, almost 100 years to the day after Bob Stidolph began his first diary.

This project was not without its challenges, such as photographing 3,100 pages of his 14 notebooks, learning to read his handwriting, and pinpointing the present-day location of the many locality names that occur in his diaries that are no longer in current usage. Despite all this, both Joanna and I thoroughly enjoyed the experience, and in the process learned a great deal about historical changes to the birdlife of the Wairarapa and Wellington regions, which has already proven useful to us in our past and present roles as Birds New Zealand regional recorders. We're also extremely pleased to report that 100 years after Bob Stidolph made that crucial first diary entry, his newly digitised and accessible bird observations are now being used to inform environmental monitoring and conservation decision-making in the Wellington region.

Joanna and I also discovered that his notebooks represent the tip of a very, very large iceberg. Scattered in archives, libraries, museums, and indeed the homes of Birds New Zealand members, is an enormous trove of historical bird observations stretching back to the late 19th Century. This wealth of data has the potential to provide us with a remarkably detailed view of the spatial patterns and trends in bird distribution in New Zealand since the late 1800s, providing us with a detailed new 'baseline' which could be used to help inform our present-day conservation efforts. However, most of these bird records exist solely in the form of physical notebooks, logbooks, or field datasheets, making them time-consuming to discover, access, and use. As a result, this wealth of information remains under-utilised, and will remain so until it is digitised and stored in a single, easily accessible archive such as *eBird*. Given the huge value that these historical bird records hold, we'd like to encourage any Birds New Zealand member with an interest in historical ornithology to adopt their own "Stidolph" project, and any members wishing to do so would be welcome to contact us for advice on how to get started.

JOANNA McVEAGH & NIKKI McARTHUR

MORE



BY APPOINTMENT TO
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II
SWAROVSKI OPTIK
SUPPLIER OF BINOCULARS

NL PURE
ONE WITH
NATURE

SEE THE UNSEEN



SWAROVSKI
OPTIK

SWAROVSKI INTERNATIONAL (NZ) LTD.
3/45 Queen Street, Auckland 1010, New Zealand
Tel. 04-5954286, optik.sia@swarovski.com, www.swarovskioptik.com