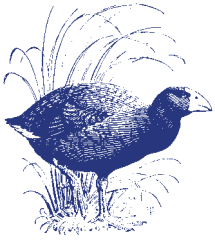


No. 12 December 2016

Birds New Zealand



The Magazine of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand



Birds New Zealand



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Fruzio's aim is to raise awareness of the dedicated work of Birds New Zealand and to enable wider public engagement with the organisation. We have re-shaped our marketing strategy and made a firm commitment of \$100,000 to be donated over the course of the next 3 years. Follow our journey on: www.facebook/fruzio.

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

COVER IMAGE

Front cover: **Yellow-eyed Penguins** or **Höiho**, adults braying, Otago Peninsula. Photo by Craig McKenzie, New Zealand Birds Online.

Birds of New Zealand's Subantarctic Islands



▲ Snares Crested Penguin, Snares Island.
Photo by Tony Whitehead, New Zealand Birds Online.
See 'Birding Expeditions' story on page 5.



▲ Subantarctic Snipe (*C. a. perseverance*), Campbell Island.
Photo by Mary-Anne Lea, New Zealand Birds Online.
See 'Birding Expeditions' story on page 5.

President's Report



Shorebird Counts

I am writing this report after helping to complete the latest round of shorebird counts. I am also mindful that teams of people have been active across New Zealand on similar activities and that this adds knowledge to a dataset now stretching back for nearly 60 years. This dataset is proving especially valuable to the Queensland University team analysing the data in conjunction with Australian data to establish long term population trends for shorebird species. Without this long term data the normal annual fluctuations cannot be easily placed into context.

However, it is becoming more difficult to find people in some areas to help with these counts. I would urge people to make themselves available for future counts because this is one of the most important datasets that the Society has in its records. Sometimes it is necessary for people to count at sites where there are few birds, but it is more important to have a nil return than to have a question mark in the data. I have heard comments from some participants that there is 'no use' in them counting because they never see any birds on their patch. If you do strike a low count site then I would urge you – once you have finished – to go to a site where there are birds, because often it is as the tide is falling that the rarer birds become more obvious. Most importantly, please take the opportunity to be involved.

Brian Bell

It is with real sadness that I record that recently Brian Bell, one of the fellows of the Society, died in Blenheim. An obituary for Brian is being prepared to appear in the Society's publications in the near future. As a young birder I used to be enthralled by stories of the exploits of Brian and his Wildlife Service teams, and his long service to the Society. This made me even more determined to become involved and he was a real inspiration to me. The thoughts of the Society are with the Bell family, all of whom are actively involved in the work of the Society.

10th Australasian Shorebird Conference

This conference was very capably organised and hosted by Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust (PMNT) in October, under the leadership of Adrian Riegen. It brings together shorebird people from Australia and New Zealand and is a great opportunity to hear about work being done in both countries. While some populations are still declining there are some really inspirational works being done by community groups.

Records Appraisal Committee

Ian Southey has been appointed to the RAC, where he will bring a fresh perspective to deliberations. This opportunity has largely arisen because of the death of Brian Bell who had the role of independent assessor of submissions made by other RAC members. That role has now been taken by Paul Sagar who has been on the committee for 32 years and has processed 1,600 records. We acknowledge the contribution that Paul has made and I am pleased that his expertise will not be entirely lost in the meantime.

Our People

Several members have recently received recognition for their contributions to the community. The first that I wish to acknowledge is Vice President Bruce McKinlay, who was awarded He Tahu Tiketike na Te Papa Atawhai – Award for Excellence by the Department of Conservation (DOC). This acknowledges the close community connections that Bruce has developed through his role in DOC. Part of that is his association with the Society, but it also acknowledges the partnership that he has developed with the Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust and the East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership. Bruce fulfils the role of the Convenor of

the Yellow Sea Task Force which involves liaising between those countries around the Yellow Sea, and which is a key stopover site for migratory birds from New Zealand and Australia. Our congratulations go to Bruce and we are thankful that he can still fulfil his voluntary role in the Society.

Our congratulations also go to Auckland member Dr Brian Gill who was awarded an Associate Emeritus Medal by Auckland War Memorial Museum in October. Brian is a former Council member of the Society and a former Chairman of the Society's Checklist Committee.

It was also good to see two young birders acknowledged for their efforts. In Wellington, George Hobson was awarded a Pride of Wellington award for his work as a Zealandia guide. This is a great acknowledgement of the effort that he has put into this role and the way that he inspires others. Another active young birder, Oscar Thomas, received an acknowledgement through his school in Auckland, receiving the conservation award. Both of these young people are very active in the birding community and we look forward to their future involvement in the work of the Society.

Heritage Expeditions

Once again, Heritage Expeditions has placed an advertisement on the back cover of this magazine promoting a series of "Birding Expeditions". The Society warmly welcomes the support of Heritage Expeditions. For each member of the Society that joins one of these "Birding Expeditions", Heritage Expeditions will donate 5% of the fare to the Society. So please be sure to inform them of your membership if you sign up for one of these wonderful expeditions.

Research Funding Opportunities

There are several ways the Society can provide grants to assist with research costs. Full details are posted on the Society's website, or can be obtained from Executive Officer Ingrid Hutzler. One way is through the Birds New Zealand Research Fund, which contains a substantial pool of money that is distributed each year to successful applicants. We thank the sponsors for their support which encourages bird research.

The David Medway Memorial Scholarship funded by a grant from George Mason Charitable Trust aims to encourage research into birds, particularly within the Taranaki region. However, if no suitable applications from the Taranaki region are received then the terms of the grant would allow this to be allocated to any suitable research.

I would also take the opportunity to acknowledge the generous donation to the Society by Fruzio which enables a number of research activities organised by the Society, particularly those that involve members. The key purpose of the Fruzio partnership is to encourage more people to join as members in order to widen the work of the Society.

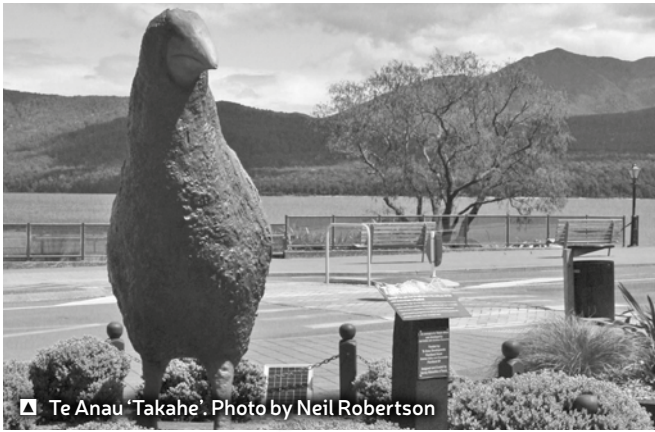
2017 Conference

Planning for the next Conference and AGM to be held in Te Anau during Queens Birthday weekend (3rd-5th June 2017) is now well advanced. This looks like it will be another really interesting conference located in a beautiful part of New Zealand. Neil Robertson and his very small team have laid the ground work for a wonderful experience. I would urge members to register early so that the logistics can be more easily organised.

Festive Season

This will be my last report before the festive season and I hope that all members have a great break and a relaxing time. I would urge you to take the opportunity to enjoy the birds that surround wherever you may be, and to post the records into e-Bird to add to the huge pool of data that is now being achieved.

DAVID LAWRIE, President



Birds New Zealand Conference & AGM 2017

The Birds New Zealand Conference and AGM 2017 will be held in Te Anau during Queen's Birthday weekend 2017. The events and meals will take place at the Distinction Te Anau Hotel & Villas (64 Lakefront Drive, Te Anau). Field trips will go to Lake Orbell/Takahe Valley (limited places available), Fiordland National Park, and Awarua Bay. Registration details will be posted on the Society's website shortly at www.osnz.org.nz or contact your Regional Representative.

2nd June 2017 (Friday)

4-6pm Registration (Distinction Te Anau Hotel & Villas)

3rd June 2017 (Saturday)

8am-9am Registration

9am-3pm Scientific Day One

3pm-5pm Birds New Zealand AGM

5pm-6pm Happy Hour

Followed by an Informal Dinner at the Distinction Te Anau Hotel & Villas

4th June 2017 (Sunday)

8am-9am Registration

9am-5pm Workshops and Scientific Day Two

5pm-7pm Happy Hour

7pm onwards Conference Dinner at the Distinction Te Anau Hotel & Villas

5th June 2017 (Monday)

Field Trips Departing from the Distinction Te Anau Hotel & Villas

Records Appraisal Committee membership changes

The RAC acknowledges the passing of Birds New Zealand Fellow Brian Bell. Brian was an almost continuous member of the Rare Birds Committee from its foundation in 1975 through to its evolution into the RAC in 2010. He then took on the role of independent assessor of submissions made by other RAC members, ably performing this role for the last 6 years. Brian retained his interest in the identification of vagrant birds, right to the end, and it is no exaggeration to say that he died with his birding boots on. Brian made a huge contribution to the committee over more than four decades, and his legacy continues through the ongoing involvement of his daughter Biz as RAC Secretary. Our thoughts and best wishes go out to Sue, Biz and the rest of Brian's family.

Long-serving RAC member Paul Sagar has stepped aside from the main committee to take on the role that Brian held. Our thanks and acknowledgement go to Paul for his conscientious service to the committee over more than three decades, and for offering to remain involved. We welcome Ian Southey to the committee, who will fill the vacancy. The full members of the RAC are Andrew Crossland, Ian Saville, Ian Southey, Alan Tennyson and Colin Miskelly (Convenor).

COLIN MISKELLY, RAC Convenor

2017 Membership Renewals

Subscriptions are due on 1st January 2017 and can now be paid online at www.osnz.org.nz Members with an email address will receive a membership renewal form via email. Members who do not have email (or who have not sent the Membership Secretary their email address) will not receive a renewal form as an insert with this edition. Please endeavour to pay on or close to the due date because the Society depends on your subscription to continue its work to encourage and support the study and enjoyment of birds.

Call for Nominations for Council

The three year Council term of Delia Small (Secretary), Keith Woodley and Mel Galbraith will expire at the next AGM (2017). Nominations are called for these positions. Note that the incumbents are eligible to stand again for these positions. Nominations will close with the Secretary on **28th February 2017**. Nominations papers must be signed by two financial members of the Society and be consented to in writing by the person nominated who must also be a financial member of the Society. Would nominators please include brief *curriculum vitae* of the nominated person if that person is not already a member of Council.

Delia Small, Secretary, P.O. Box 834, Nelson

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The 2017 Annual General Meeting will be held at Te Anau Hotel and Villas, Lakefront Drive, Te Anau on Saturday

3rd June 2016.

Delia Small, Secretary, P.O. Box 834, Nelson

Calls for Notices of Motion

Notice of any motion to be considered by the 2017 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before **28th February 2017** and be in writing and signed by a mover and seconder who shall be financial members of the Society.

Delia Small, Secretary, P.O. Box 834, Nelson

David Medway Memorial Scholarship

This new scholarship is sponsored by the George Mason Charitable Trust and named in commemoration of David Medway. It is intended to provide financial support to a student studying full-time at post-graduate level on a topic relating to ornithology. One scholarship may be awarded every two years with a maximum value of \$5,000. The criteria, conditions and an application form are available on our website: <http://www.osnz.org.nz/David-Medway-Memorial-Scholarship>

Applications open on 1st December 2016 and close on 13th February 2017.

New Zealand Birds Online tops 1.5 million

Visits to the New Zealand Birds Online (NZBO) website have passed the 1.5 million mark and new species pages have been added for Herald Petrel, Red-footed Booby, and Sansom's Plover (a newly-described fossil wader from St Bathans, Otago). The first two species were officially added to the New Zealand checklist in September. Congratulations and many thanks to Vanesa De Pietri, Steve Wood and Bob Atkinson respectively for contributing the master images for these new pages, and to Steve Wood, Tim Barnard and Chris Collins for finding these species on the 2016 Heritage Expeditions voyage to the Kermadec Islands. A total of 425 photographers have now submitted 10,491 images to the NZBO archive. Most recently, more than 200 new images of 60 species were contributed. New master images were selected from among them for 20 species. NZBO is now keen to see further images for Herald Petrel and Red-footed Booby submitted. As for all vagrant species on the New Zealand checklist, NZBO welcomes and encourages submissions of images of these species taken elsewhere in their ranges.

COLIN MISKELLY, New Zealand Birds Online Project Manager

Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2016

The 2016 funding round of the Birds New Zealand Research Fund has attracted a large number of very good quality applications. Fourteen projects have been selected by the panel for funding. Full details are available on the Birds New Zealand website: www.osnz.org.nz/Birds-NZ-Research-Fund

Hōiho nest camera study

The Yellow-eyed Penguin or Hōiho population on mainland New Zealand is declining, with recent population models suggesting the species will be locally extinct within 30 years. In the 1980s, predation by introduced predators, food shortages and terrestrial habitat loss were considered the primary threats. Many communities have worked to restore coastal habitat and maintained predator controls to help Hōiho numbers increase over the last 30 years. However, Hōiho depend on the marine environment to provide them with reliable high-quality sources of food. In spite of these conservation actions, Hōiho have continued to decline in number on the mainland. Threats in the marine environment include marine pollution, fisheries by-catch, competition and disturbance to the sea floor. Declining diet quality, and in some years, diet quantity, may be driving the overall decline of mainland Hōiho. A poor diet results in higher susceptibility to disease, lowered juvenile survival and recruitment, and population decline through mass starvation events affecting adults, juveniles and chicks.

Previous studies suggest that in poor breeding seasons, adult Hōiho had to forage for longer to find food, but delivered larger, poorer-quality meals to chicks (chronic nutritional stress). This is in contrast to more recent observations of high investment in pair-bond maintenance on return from sea and less frequent feeding exchanges to chicks, which suggests that some birds are struggling to return with any food (acute nutritional stress). Reliable access to high-quality prey within the foraging range of Hōiho on the Otago coast may be threatened by climate change and dredging, fishing or dumping. Nest cameras over a wide geographic area will provide reliable data over two seasons and determine inter-individual differences in foraging trip duration, investment in pair-bond maintenance, and the timing and frequency of chick provisioning.

This is part of a larger PhD study of nutritional stress in Hōiho on the Otago coast, which will include determining winter and pre-moult foraging locations, juvenile dispersal, and the overlap of contemporaneous industrial activities. The information will be coupled with diet analysis. Using nest cameras will vastly increase our understanding of chick provisioning during the breeding season, without being invasive, as it will allow us to monitor 30 nests across 11 breeding sites and three breeding regions over two seasons. MEL YOUNG, University of Otago

Impacts of disturbance on Subantarctic Hōiho

It is estimated that there are fewer than 2,000 pairs of the endangered endemic Yellow-eyed Penguin or Hōiho. The species has a restricted range in the south of the South Island, Stewart Island and some Zealand Subantarctic Islands. Enderby Island in the Auckland Islands is a stronghold for Hōiho, where there is an estimated 300 breeding pairs. Impacts from disturbance have been implicated in declines on the New Zealand mainland, but there has been little study of the impacts of disturbance at the Subantarctic Islands and how this may be managed in future. With funding from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund and DOC we aim to investigate the impacts of disturbance on Hōiho on Enderby Island using innovative technology that allows remote monitoring of Hōiho transits, foraging trips and nesting success.

REBECCA FRENCH and CHRIS MULLER, Massey University

'Birding Expeditions' – Members' Special

There is still time to book places on Heritage Expeditions' *'South-Western Pacific Odyssey'* (1-18 April 2017) and *'Forgotten Islands of the South Pacific'* (16-23 December 2016) expedition at time of writing. Spaces are limited so you will need to book fast. For every member who makes a booking, Heritage Expeditions will donate 5% to Birds New Zealand. Three more 'Birding Expeditions' are also now open for booking: 'Birding Down Under' (13-30 Nov 2017) and 'Forgotten Islands of the South Pacific' (14-21 Dec 2017; 3-10 Jan 2018). More details on back cover.

The *'South-Western Pacific Odyssey'* itinerary includes stops and excursions at Norfolk Island, New Caledonia, and five of the Solomon Islands, ending in Kokopo/Rabaul, Papua New Guinea. The expedition will look for endemic land birds such as Kagu, Crow Honeyeater, Solomons Sea Eagle, Blyth's Hornbill and Yellow-bibbed Lory, and seabird species such as New Caledonia Storm Petrel, Beck's Petrel and Heinroth's Petrel, as well as whales and dolphins. This expedition will also include a Birds New Zealand representative, Birds New Zealand editor Michael Szabo, who will present an on-board lecture about the birds of New Caledonia and the Solomon Islands, which he is familiar with from previous visits. See articles and photos on pages 10-13 and 19.

The *'Forgotten Islands of the South Pacific'* expedition to the New Zealand subantarctic includes the Snares, Enderby Island in the Auckland Islands, and Campbell Island. During excursions the expedition will look for endemic land bird species such as Subantarctic Snipe and Campbell Island Teal, and seabirds such as Buller's Mollmawk, Southern Royal Albatross and Snares Crested Penguin, as well as whales, elephant seals and sea lions. This expedition will also include a Birds New Zealand representative, Michelle Bradshaw, who will present an on-board lecture about her research work on subantarctic seabirds. See photos on page 2.

To make bookings please telephone Heritage Expeditions on 0800 262 8873 or send an email to: info@heritage-expeditions.com.

Hōiho fledgling study

The vulnerable endemic Yellow-eyed Penguin or Hōiho is restricted to the southern South Island, Stewart Island and some Subantarctic Islands. In recent years, large numbers of Hōiho chicks have been underweight and removed from their nests for supplementary feeding at DOC-approved rehabilitation centres to improve adult survival in years of poor food supply and to prevent chick mortality. There are no rehabilitation centres in the Catlins region, therefore underweight chicks that are captured in the Catlins are rehabilitated and released on the Otago Peninsula. Healthy fledglings naturally disperse north along the Otago and Canterbury coast in their juvenile year, but 84 percent return to near their area of birth to breed from two-years-old. For supplementary-fed chicks the impact of 'hard-release' (direct to the wild) and 'soft-release' (gradual release to the wild) on their dispersal behaviour is unknown. The soft-release method allows chicks to bond with a breeding site and local adult birds, and decreases the likelihood they will return in a weak state shortly after leaving the nest.

This study will investigate the dispersal mechanisms of supplementary-fed chicks away from their release site, and aims to identify important at-sea areas for juvenile Hōiho using tracking devices attached to the fledglings. The study is part of a larger Honours project to determine the effectiveness of supplementary feeding of Hōiho chicks and subsequent parental survival. BRYONY ALDEN, University of Otago



▲ Tawaki with GPS dive logger attached. Photo by Dave Houston

Marine ecology, breeding biology and population size of Tawaki

Until recently, Fiordland Crested Penguin or Tawaki was one of the least known penguin species in New Zealand. In 2014, the Tawaki Project set out to investigate how they cope with the diverse oceanic habitats that characterise their breeding distribution in South Westland, Fiordland and Stewart Island. The project studies the penguins' foraging movements and diving behaviour using miniaturised GPS dive loggers to collect information essential for the planning of marine protected areas and the assessment of the impacts of anthropogenic factors such as fisheries and pollution. The project also includes the determination of diet preferences via faecal DNA analysis, examination of gene flow, and establishment of basic breeding parameters across the species' breeding range. In addition to collecting research data at key sites, the project communicates its results through reports, public talks and social media, and engages the public in a citizen science project. A trial in 2016 showed that using colour-coded devices in Milford Sound allows tour operators and visitors to accurately report sightings of study birds. With the help of local tour operators, the Tawaki Project also aims to map and count the Tawaki population in Milford Sound to gauge the accuracy of existing population estimates.

THOMAS MATTERN, University of Otago

Palaeoecology and ancient DNA of the Kakapo

Uniquely for any living native bird species, faecal materials centuries old from long-extinct Kakapo populations have been preserved in caves throughout the South Island, representing a variety of habitats different from those occupied today. This project, based at the Long-Term Ecology Lab (LTE) at Lincoln University, will use a range of methods to explore the content of Kakapo coprolites (preserved faeces), including ancient DNA, next-generation sequencing, and fossil analyses. Together these data will provide a closer understanding of Kakapo diet, disease, behaviour and ecological roles. LTE currently possesses Kakapo coprolites which are currently being analysed, but these originate from just two localities and provide minimal ecological variation. Large, confirmed but unsampled deposits of Kakapo coprolites still occur in many remote caves, such as the ecologically unique site of Euphrates Cave in the Garibaldi Plateau, North-West Nelson. Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2016 will fund field work to sample several such sites, representing a wide range of ecologies.

ALEX BOAST, PhD candidate, University of Auckland

Northern Kermadec seabirds

By the year 2000 the largest island in the Kermadec group, Raoul Island, was almost devoid of seabirds. Millions had been lost to introduced cats and rats following periods of human occupation, until no petrels or shearwaters remained there. The Birds New Zealand Research Fund has funded this project, including two volunteers spending up to three months on Raoul Island in 2017. The project, which is a collaboration between Northern NZ Seabird Trust and others, is the first stage towards establishing a more comprehensive research programme for northern Kermadec seabirds, building on the *ad hoc* study since eradication by visiting scientists and DOC staff. Key tasks will be establishing study sites for the winter and summer breeding Kermadec Petrel populations established on Raoul and Meyer Islands; studying burrows for Wedge-tailed Shearwaters to be established on Raoul Island; initiating tracking studies for winter and summer breeding Kermadec Petrels and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters; surveying for other species (White and Sooty Tern, Red-tailed Tropicbird); and searching for signs of White-naped Petrel breeding on Raoul Island.

CHRIS GASKIN, Trustee/Project Coordinator, Northern NZ Seabird Trust

Biology of Buller's Shearwater at the Poor Knights Islands

The only nesting site of the vulnerable endemic Buller's Shearwater is the Poor Knights Islands. Evidence suggests that foraging trips during incubation may have increased in the past 40 years from four to up to 14 days, and new at-sea records of adults suggest they could be traveling further south in single foraging bouts during chick provisioning. Recent visits (2011/12) during breeding indicate previous population estimates appear to be have been either far too high or the population has declined significantly. This study will investigate their populations and breeding biology at these islands, including assessing the duration of incubating and chick provisioning shifts. This will be achieved with controlled site burrow checks, population models using burrow occupancies around transects, and acoustic surveys of population densities, and with establishing permanent plots for continued monitoring. We aim to have a preliminary population estimate by the end of 2017. These data could potentially lead to a change in the species' conservation status and management in New Zealand, while also contributing to the biological understanding of a little-known endemic seabird at an international level.

MEGAN FRIESEN AND JAMES ROSS, Northern NZ Seabird Trust

Common Diving Petrel foraging behaviour

Colonies of Common Diving Petrels in the Hauraki Gulf breed through winter and forage on krill. Higher densities of krill are found in the outer Gulf areas (ie, near the Mokohinau Islands), with low densities occurring in the inner Gulf areas (ie, near Tiritiri Matangi). Whether this results in inner Gulf colonies having greater levels of stress and lower breeding success is unknown. We will test whether inner Gulf colonies are more stressed compared to outer Gulf colonies by attaching GPS devices to adult birds from Tiritiri Matangi and the Mokohinau Islands to track foraging effort during the breeding season. To measure stress, we will take blood and feather samples to measure stress hormones and stable isotopes within both tissues. Measurements of chick weight and fledging success will be made to compare breeding success among colonies. Future conservation plans involve translocating diving petrels to islands deeper within the Gulf (ie, Rotoroa Island), so understanding where they prefer to forage, and whether distance from prime feeding grounds results in increased stress and reduced breeding success, is vital. The results will help optimise the location of future colonies.

BRENDEEN DUMPHY AND MATT RAYNOR, University of Auckland

Brown Skua: Variation in resource use and movement

Brown Skuas are large predatory seabirds that are thought to be declining at one of their major breeding sites in New Zealand, the Chatham Islands. Investigating diet composition and foraging behaviour is key to improving our understanding of the factors that may contribute to their decline. Here, we link inter-individual specialisation in resource-use and movement behaviour across three subsequent breeding seasons. Using two distinct datasets – stable carbon and nitrogen signatures from skua blood and GPS-based tracking data – we provide consistent measures of individual skua diet and movement behaviour of a Brown Skua colony on South East Island (see photo). The results will show whether observed movement patterns are reflected in individual skua diet. Individuals that have been tracked and sampled over three subsequent seasons will allow for testing whether diet preferences and movement behaviours in Brown Skua persist over time and contexts. The 2016 Birds New Zealand Research Fund will enable us to perform research in a remote and logistically expensive study site.

HENDRIK SCHULTZ, University of Auckland

Coccidia in Northern Brown Kiwi creches

The aim of this research is to describe the cycle of *coccidia* oocyst shedding in Northern Brown Kiwi, including any newly encountered morphological types of *coccidian* parasites. Individual kiwi at rearing centres will be monitored throughout a 24-hour period via regular enclosure searches for faecal samples. Samples will be tested to determine the times during which the peak number of *coccidia* oocysts are shed. Oocysts from collected samples will be sporulated using potassium dichromate and compared with previously described oocysts found in kiwi, and any novel types will be described morphologically. The results of this research will allow kiwi managers and wildlife veterinarians to better manage *coccidia* in juvenile kiwi, being able to more confidently interpret faecal egg counts as part of a management programme. It is hoped that managers can use this information to construct a comprehensive *coccidia* management plan involving accurate testing in order to limit the effects of *coccidia* in a sustainable and evidence-based manner.

HARRY TAYLOR, Massey University

Eastern Otago Kārearea study

Funds have been awarded to study the endemic Kārearea or New Zealand Falcon in eastern Otago. Despite being vulnerable, very little is known to inform their conservation management in South Island conifer plantations. While there are clear guidelines for managing Kārearea in conifer plantations, these are based on Kārearea interactions with conifer plantation forestry in the central North Island where the habitat is distinct from the South Island. Behavioural differences between Kārearea in the North Island and the Dunedin area have been identified that may have important implications for nest survival in conifer plantations in coastal Otago. I have established a three-year project to collect the key information needed for management of Kārearea in eastern Otago. This includes population and nest survival estimates, and investigating mitigation options to increase nest survival (if required). It also aims to establish a banded population from which adult survival rates and population trends can be estimated. Funding has also been provided by City Forests, Wenita Forestry Products, Otago Regional Council and Dunedin City Council. Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka ki Puketeraki and Tē Rūnanga te Otākou are also supportive of the project.

GRAHAM PARKER

Australasian Gannet diet and predator/prey interaction

During breeding, adult Australasian Gannets make regular foraging trips from land-based colonies to coastal waters to collect food for chicks. Birds returning with full crops to feed chicks can be induced to regurgitate and the food items collected. Their diet can then be described by identifying the relatively undigested items, or in the case of more digested items, using more digestive resistant body parts such as fish ear bones and squid beaks. A range of new approaches relying on the extraction and analyses of remnant DNA from prey eaten by predators has been developed. This remnant DNA may be recovered from digested stomach contents or gannet faeces. This study will compare the results of diet analyses based on the traditional method of analysing the contents of regurgitations and these new molecular approaches. It will also investigate whether we can detect and identify remnant DNA from marine organisms eaten by the fish and squid prey of gannets. This would allow the description of the food web on which gannets depend at multiple levels, in a way not possible using traditional analyses.

NIGEL ADAMS, Unitec

Understanding how translocation may impact seabird nestlings

Research has been undertaken to improve the success of seabird translocations, including modifying the artificial diet and the form of artificial housing. However, very little is known about how the stress of translocation impacts on the birds during and after the event, and whether this affects their ability to survive and establish viable new colonies. Petrels are able to perceive and respond to stressors at a high level from hatching. Accordingly, chronic stress (presumed to be induced by translocation) in petrel chicks may result in energy divergence away from growth and condition, with potential negative flow-on effects throughout the bird's life, including poor condition and reduced reproductive success. Using Mottled Petrel as a model species, the main aim of this research is to study the cumulative impact of translocation and associated activities on chick physiology in order to determine the most stressful part of translocation and enable mitigation of these stresses in the future. We will also examine how stress caused by translocation affects the dynamics exhibited by newly establishing petrel populations. This information will be particularly valuable to the management of future avian translocations, especially species which exhibit similar life-history characteristics to petrels.

RACHAEL L. SAGAR, PhD candidate, University of Auckland

Capacity of urban restored sites to support native birds

This research will investigate the capacity of urban restored sites to contribute to biodiversity conservation and reconnect urban residents with nature by evaluating restored sites in Hamilton and New Plymouth in terms of the following restoration goals: (1) having similar diversity and community structure in comparison with reference sites; (2) being capable of sustaining reproducing populations of indigenous species; and (3) connecting people with nature and providing environmental education. This research will collect data on landscape composition and configuration, local habitat variables such as vegetation cover, leaf litter depth and presence of important fruiting trees, and predation levels within study sites. I also need to interview city residents and distribute an online survey. The generous support of the Birds New Zealand Research Fund will provide some of the funds to cover these research expenses. If you live in Hamilton or New Plymouth and are interested in getting involved with the study, please contact Elizabeth Elliot: eee5@students.waikato.ac.nz

ELIZABETH E. ELLIOT, University of Waikato

Kerguelen Summer – et les Pétrels Plongeur

Article and Photographs by Colin Miskelly

The remote islands of the French subantarctic have fascinated me since I first found a dead Kerguelen Petrel on Muriwai Beach in 1976. A decade later their attraction grew stronger after Paul Sagar returned with images and stories from a summer assisting French seabird ecologists on the Kerguelen Islands. France maintains research bases on the Crozet and Kerguelen Islands and on Amsterdam Island – all in the southern Indian Ocean – but the islands remain inaccessible and mysterious to naturalists from the New Zealand sector of the Southern Ocean.

My opportunity to visit Kerguelen and Crozet arose through a long-standing connection between Te Papa and French research agency CNRS, plus the good fortune to have undertaken a long-term study of Common Diving Petrels on Mana Island. Dr Charles-Andre Bost of CNRS was planning a comparative study of the foraging ecology of two diving petrel species at Kerguelen and invited me to assist with establishing study colonies of both species on islands in the Golfe du Morbihan, which included installing artificial nest boxes based on designs used on Mana Island.

To get to Kerguelen I flew to the nearby island of La Réunion, an Overseas Department of France. The French research ship *Marion Dufresne* departed La Réunion on 8th December heading to Crozet, Kerguelen and Amsterdam Islands, before repeating the circuit a month late (and bringing us back). The entire trip involved four days sailing south to Crozet, two days ashore on Ile de la Possession (Crozet), three days east to Kerguelen, one month ashore there, then the two week return leg to La Réunion. Throughout our time at sea, Charly and I undertook hourly 10-minute bird counts, recording 47 pelagic bird species including Amsterdam, Sooty and Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, Indian Ocean Yellow-nosed Mollymawk, Barau's, Bulwer's, Kerguelen and Blue Petrels, dark-morph Soft-plumaged Petrels, Tropical Shearwater, White-tailed Tropicbird, Sooty Tern, and vast flocks of Salvin's, Antarctic and Thin-billed Prions. A feature of our voyages was how few birds there were in a zone between 24° and 34° South. Great-winged Petrels were virtually the only species present.

Our visit to 'Terre Austral Française' was supported by IPEV (Institut Paul Emile Victor), and Charly had research students and IPEV 'volontaires' already in place. Most of the research there focussed on a 'small' (17,000 pair) King Penguin colony near the base, where I was amused to observe numerous Black-faced Sheathbills 'mugging' penguin feeding events. They flew at the penguin chicks' heads just as their parents regurgitated, causing food to spill on the ground, where sheathbills would converge in a feeding frenzy. Other highlights here included nesting Wandering Albatrosses, Light-mantled Sooty Albatrosses and Northern Giant Petrels, White-chinned Petrels, and an Eaton's Pintail nest with five eggs.

Isles Kerguelen is a massive archipelago, roughly four times the size of Stewart Island. Within a day of being delivered to the base at Port aux Français, three of us were flown 40 kilometres north to a huge Macaroni Penguin colony at Cap Cotter. We then had to walk back 80 kilometres to the base via Peninsula Courbet after we completed our week-long stay.

The main focus at Cap Cotter was continuing Charly's studies of Macaroni Penguins, which included GPS-tracking breeding females that were making short-foraging trips while feeding chicks that were guarded by their mates, and collecting blood and feathers from adults and juveniles for stable isotope comparison. We also installed a solar-powered PIT-tag reader. I was struck by the relatively small size of the Macaroni Penguins, which seemed no larger than Snares Crested Penguins. This was reinforced when we found two vagrant Royal Penguins from Macquarie Island among them. In addition

to their white faces and massive bills, these Royal Penguins towered over their dark-faced cousins.

The Cap Cotter coast had an impressive range of spectacular wildlife. Wandering Albatrosses nested to near sea-level, and there were colonies of Kerguelen Shags and Gentoo Penguins, scattered King Penguins, Antarctic Fur Seals, Southern Elephant Seals, Southern Skuas and Northern Giant Petrels, as well as Antarctic Terns and a variety of smaller petrels flying past.

The first day and a half of our walk back to base involved counting over 10,000 Antarctic Fur Seal pups along the north-east Peninsula Courbet coast. From Cap Digby south we encountered increasing numbers of King Penguins and Elephant Seals along a coast reputed to hold the greatest biomass of vertebrates on the planet. This included the impressive 90,000-pair King Penguin colony at Cap Ratmanoff, where we stayed before our final day of walking back to base.

The most surprising wildlife sighting of the trip was shortly before we reached Port aux Français, while inspecting a small nesting colony of Kerguelen Terns. Their alarm calling attracted a Long-tailed Skua in breeding plumage – a first record for the island group, in an unexpected location and the 'wrong' plumage for the time of year. The Kerguelen Terns recognised it as if an ancient enemy, and chased it away from their nests.

The remainder of our stay on Kerguelen focussed on diving petrels on two islands in the Golfe du Morbihan. First was a week on Ile Mayes, which was identified as a rat, cat and rabbit-free refuge for petrels by long-serving Te Papa staff member Jean-Claude Stahl during the mid-1980s. A small hut was built on the island soon after then, and IPEV staff have been monitoring six petrel species there for the last 30 years. This includes Common Diving Petrels, which were breeding about two months later than the birds that I had handled on Mana Island only five weeks earlier. We fitted and retrieved GPS tags to breeding birds, and also attached geolocator tags to the legs of others, which a volunteer will endeavour to recover 10-11 months later, to find out where they went in winter.

We shifted to another island to study South Georgian Diving Petrels, which are not present on Ile Mayes. Charly had not been to Ile aux Cochons before and so we didn't know how quickly we could find a study colony, nor how the birds would respond to handling. Both exceeded expectations, and by the end of the week we had installed four trial nest boxes, deployed and retrieved nine GPS tags on breeding birds, and attached ten geolocator tags to other birds.

Cochons was a fascinating island, with abundant relics from its whaling past, and great landscapes and wildlife. This included nesting sheathbills, Eaton's Pintail and Antarctic Terns, a colony of Kerguelen Shags, and at least 11 species of burrow-nesting petrels. The island had been cleared of rabbits about 15 years earlier and (along with Ile Mayes) gave a taste of what the main island (Grande Terre) would have been like before the introduction of rabbits, mice, rats, cats and reindeer.

The French, of course, do everything in style, and I greatly enjoyed the superb cuisine on board and at the bases, plus the exotic (to me) ingredients provided in the field. These included preserved duck and chestnuts, and a greater variety of tinned vegetables and meals than we get in New Zealand – and I never saw a tin of baked beans or spaghetti in tomato sauce among our field supplies!

Colin Miskelly is a Curator of Vertebrates at Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and a Council member of Birds New Zealand. A series of blogs based on his experiences in the southern Indian Ocean published in January-February 2016 are posted online at: <http://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/>



▲ Macaroni Penguins



▲ Ile aux Cochons
Inset: Long-tailed Skua



▲ Sheathbill 'mugging' a King Penguin as it feeds its chick



▲ Kerguelen Tern nesting in tundra habitat



▲ Colin Miskelly crossing Lac Marville outlet



▲ Common Diving Petrel



▲ Blyth's Hornbill is one of the largest flying bird species in the Solomon Islands. This is a male at Mt Austen, Guadalcanal.



▲ A Sphinx-like pair of Solomons Nightjars on Tetepare. Photo supplied by Allan Bero.



▲ The elusive Melanesian Megapode is quite easy to see on Tetepare. Photo by Michael Szabo.



▲ The flightless Roviana Rail was not described until 1991.



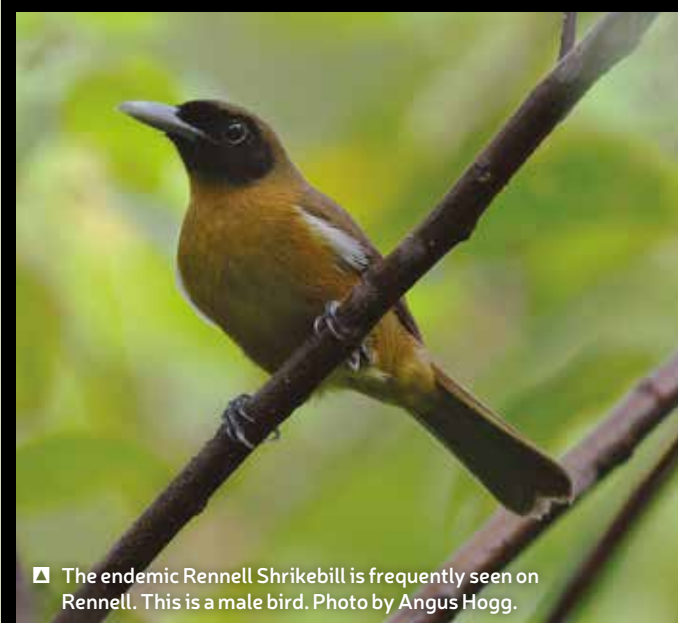
▲ Female Blyth's Hornbill at Mt Austen, Guadalcanal.



▲ Solomons Sea Eagle is the apex forest predator on the main Solomon Islands.



▲ At 9cm Finsch's Pygmy Parrot is one of the world's smallest parrots – even smaller than the New Zealand Rock Wren.



▲ The endemic Rennell Shrikebill is frequently seen on Rennell. This is a male bird. Photo by Angus Hogg.



▲ The Yellow-bibbed Lory is endemic to the eastern Solomons, from Guadalcanal to Rennell.

Solomon Islands – Giant Eagles and Pygmy Parrots

Words by Michael Szabo and Photographs by Lars Petersson

I was bewitched by Solomons Nightjars, mesmerised by Melanesian Megapodes, and transfixed by the Roviana Rail. You would be captivated, too, if you saw the amazing variety of birds in the Solomon Islands that I did during a ten-day birdwatching tour in July.

Among the most spectacular species were the giant Solomons Sea Eagle and the similar-sized Blyth's Hornbill. Smaller, but no less memorable, were the eye-catching White-headed Fruit Dove, gaudy Yellow-bibbed Lory, and tiny Finsch's Pygmy Parrot.

Cloaked in rainforest down to palm-fringed beaches and bordered by turquoise lagoons and colourful coral reefs, the Solomon Islands epitomise the scenic South Pacific. Their remarkable variety of 289 bird species and high degree of endemism has drawn renowned ornithologists such as Rollo Beck, Leonard Sanford, Ernst Mayr and Jared Diamond to study its endemic riches, and evolution itself.

The six major and 900 smaller islands form an archipelago that extends in an arc south-east from New Guinea towards Vanuatu and New Caledonia. Some islands are close enough

for bird species to have reached them from New Guinea, while the archipelago is fragmented enough for endemic species to have evolved locally. This helps explain why the major Solomon Islands have been identified as the richest "Endemic Bird Area" in the world, with 70 restricted-range land bird species. A further 12 restricted-range species occur only on the isolated outlying islands of Rennell and the Temotu group.

Ornithologists have also noted an unusually high level of inter-island variation among the Solomons' songbird species and substantial inter-island subspecies variation among most of its bird species. The number of endemic species recognised is currently 73, but it seems likely that more of the 160 endemic subspecies will be recognised as full species in future as complex groups become more studied.

Although the Solomon Islands has been recognised as an avian biodiversity hot spot for decades, its birds remain under-researched, with some counting among the least studied in the world. The flightless Roviana Rail was not discovered by ornithologists until 1977 and only described in 1991.



▲ The endemic *megarhynchus* subspecies of Chestnut-bellied Monarch on Makira is black with a chestnut belly.



▲ The endemic *ugiensis* subspecies of Chestnut-bellied Monarch on Ugi is entirely black and has been proposed as a separate endemic species, Ugi Black Monarch.



▲ The endemic *gurneyi* subspecies of Pacific Baza in flight.



▲ The endemic White-billed Crow occurs on Guadalcanal, Isabel and Choiseul.

The Solomons Frogmouth was not recognised as a distinct species in its own genus until 2007, and Solomons Nightjar and West Solomons Boobook only recognised as distinct endemic species in 2014.

And as has happened in New Zealand, some birds believed to be extinct have been rediscovered in recent decades. On Guadalcanal the flightless Woodford's Rail was rediscovered in 1985, some 50 years after last being recorded, and the Moustached Kingfisher in 1994, after 40 years, and on Isabel the Black-faced Pitta was rediscovered in 1994, after 60 years. The Makira Woodhen is known from one 1929 specimen, several 1953 sightings, and unconfirmed reports from 2001 to 2005, so it may yet survive.

110 species in ten days

The tour started when I met Brenden Mautoa from the Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau at Honiara airport, Guadalcanal, on a warm July afternoon, from where we flew south to Rennell, a large raised coral atoll and World Heritage Area with seven endemic species, and its own distinctive smaller endemic subspecies of Australian White Ibis (*pygmaeus*).

We were pleased to find all but one of these endemics on the edge of rainforest near Tingoa airfield on our first day, especially a handsome pair of Rennell Shrikebill, a Rennell Fantail quivering its wings while hanging upside down, a tiny green Rennell White-eye foraging with a flock of Fan-tailed Geryones, and a bright green Finsch's Pygmy Parrot climbing a trunk and feeding on lichen.

It took a few hours on the second day to find a Rennell Whistler, but with the help of local guide Warrick Kaitu'u we managed to track one down by following its sublime Nightingale-like notes into the forest. While we tracked the whistler, Brenden and another local guide, Judd Tesua, glimpsed the island-endemic *rennellianus* subspecies of Island Thrush and then we topped this with sightings of the dazzling Silver-capped Fruit Dove and jewel-like Pacific Kingfisher.

From Rennell we flew to Makira where we saw the island-endemic White-headed Fruit Dove, Sooty Myzomela and Makira Starling along the coast road near Kirakira, and a majestic Solomons Sea Eagle gliding over the forest. We found that several regional endemics were quite easy to find near Kirakira, including the colourful Red-knobbed Imperial Pigeon and conspicuous Long-tailed Triller, but we had less luck finding the island-endemic species of honeyeater, flycatcher and boobook.

On our second day on Makira we took a 'water taxi' to the nearby island of Ugi, which is a 30 kilometre one-hour sea crossing. En route we passed Black Noddies and Bridled Terns, and on Ugi we soon found the distinctive island-endemic subspecies of Rufous Fantail, White-collared Monarch and Chestnut-bellied Monarch with the help of local guide Glen Star near the village of Umara. The Ugi subspecies of Chestnut-bellied Monarch has since been proposed as a separate species (Ugi Black Monarch) and the two other Ugi subspecies we saw also seem likely to be in future. Back on Makira we sought out and found the island endemic *megarhynchus* subspecies of Chestnut-bellied Monarch and the white-throated *russata* subspecies of Rufous Fantail in a roadside cultivated garden.

Seeing these birds made for interesting comparisons with the black-bellied *ugiensis* subspecies of Chestnut-bellied Monarch and the black-throated *ugiensis* subspecies of Rufous Fantail.

From Makira we flew to Munda in the New Georgia group where we were booked to spend a night at a scuba diving lodge before going on to Tetepare the next morning. Walking towards Ilangana Point from Munda that afternoon we saw many Island Imperial Pigeons and Cardinal Lorikeets in flight, and marveled at two breathtaking Blyth's Hornbills of the endemic subspecies, *mendanae*, which is one of the largest flying forest birds in the Solomons. Soon afterwards Brenden saw a Roviana Rail but I missed seeing it, so next morning at sunrise I walked to the same spot and within a few minutes I saw a Roviana Rail, which was probably the same one that he'd seen. It walked across a nearby unsealed track, pausing as it turned its head to look towards me, and transfixed me with its gaze before it continued into tall grass.

After breakfast a speedboat arrived at the lodge to take us to Tetepare, which at 118 square kilometres is said to be the largest uninhabited and unlogged island in the South Pacific. The 40 kilometre boat trip across Roviana lagoon and adjacent waters took ninety minutes, during which we saw several Spinner Dolphins leaping, a Solomons Sea Eagle perched on an overhanging branch, and several Great Frigatebirds wheeling overhead.

We were greeted at Tetepare Eco-Lodge by local guide Tumi Ben. With Moustached Treeswifts flying overhead, he explained that the island is uninhabited except for a small number of customary landowners who work at the community-owned Eco-Lodge. In 2002 the customary landowners decided not to allow any logging on the island and instead set up a low-impact Eco-Lodge offering accommodation and eco-tours to show visitors local forest birds and the adjacent lagoon with its coral reefs, dugongs, turtles and colourful reef fish. The Eco-Lodge has several very comfortable traditional timber chalets with solar-heated showers and flush toilets, and a meeting house where they prepare delicious meals using locally caught fish and home-grown vegetables and fruits.

In quick succession we saw three elegant songbirds here that are endemic to the New Georgia Island group: White-headed Monarch, Crimson-rumped Myzomela and Kolombangara Monarch. It wasn't long before we added to our list the island-endemic subspecies of Solomons White-eye (*tetiparius*) and the two endemic subspecies of White-winged Fantail (*albina*) and Steel-blue Flycatcher (*feminina*). The highlight of our morning walk was undoubtedly a mesmerising encounter with a pair of red and black Melanesian Megapodes raking up the leaf litter with their large feet.

After lunch we took the boat a few kilometres along the coast, passing several turtles and Beach Kingfishers before landing near a stream. Tumi Ben led us to a rock and showed us a Sphinx-like pair of Solomons Nightjars sitting on a tree root near the lagoon tide line - in broad daylight. Peering around the side of the rock I found myself unexpectedly bewitched by their half-opened eyes and intricately camouflaged plumage.

The next day we flew back to Honiara via Munda and visited Betikama wetland near Honiara airport in the afternoon, where we soon added Yellow Bittern and White-crowned Crane to our list. There was a good number of Solomons Cockatoos here, and we saw the endemic Buff-headed Coucal and White-billed Crow in flight - but there was no sign of the flightless endemic Woodford's Rail.

Early next morning we drove for half an hour out of Honiara to meet local guide Samson Hasi near the crest of 1,200 metre Mt Austen. Walking down the lesser of two unsealed roads we found the island-endemic Black-headed Myzomela, the small *solomonensis* endemic subspecies of Common Kingfisher,

and the country endemic Ultramarine Kingfisher and Midget Flowerpacker. After this we relished seeing a flock of vivid Yellow-bibbed Lories feeding in a large flowering tree and a male Blyth's Hornbill that flew over on wings as big as an eagle's. Further down the road, Samson pointed out a yellow-and-black Oriole Whistler and a black-and-white Solomons Monarch, but once again we drew a blank in our search for Woodford's Rail.

Later, during a second walk, we took the larger of the two unsealed roads where we saw plentiful Cardinal Lorikeets, Long-tailed Mynahs and Olive-backed Sunbirds. At one point a reddish-barred Variable Goshawk flew into a nearby tree, which was the island-endemic subspecies, *pulchelus*. Shortly after this we saw the island-endemic Brown-winged Starling in flight and several Melanesian endemics perched nearby, including some timid McKinlay's Cuckoo-doves, more Red-knobbed Imperial Pigeons, and several elegant Claret-breasted Fruit Doves. There was, however, no sign of Guadalcanal Boobook, the island-endemic hawk-owl that we had hoped to find.

Walking back along the road we saw much the same species again but this time we also had a welcome encounter with a perching Pied Goshawk. The *woodfordi* subspecies on Guadalcanal has both pied and dark morphs; this was the latter. We continued our search for Woodford's Rail along the crest of Mt Austen where Samson said it was sometimes seen near cultivated gardens, but drew another blank.

When we sat down to rest at the end of the walk we saw a Pacific Baza - a crested hawk species - circling overhead as a pied morph Pied Goshawk mobbed it. The Baza was an adult of the country-endemic *gurneyi* subspecies. The "Birds of Melanesia" field guide notes that there may be another two endemic subspecies in the Solomons (*proxima* and *robusta*), so this last sighting of the day was a reminder of how much there is still to be learned about the birds of the Solomon Islands, and a high note on which to end the tour.

Our final tally was 110 bird species, which included 40 endemic species and 44 endemic subspecies. In addition to the remarkable diversity of its birds, the islands themselves are spectacularly scenic and the standard of accommodation is very good where tourism is well established. Rennell had the least developed tourism infrastructure, so the self-catering guest house we stayed at in Moreno village was very basic, though not uncomfortable. Wherever we ate prepared meals the food was very good and food prices were reasonable in the markets and shops that we visited.

Small boat connections were essential for Ugi and Tetepare, as was driving up Mt Austen. It was possible to watch birds on foot at all of the destinations that we visited and English is widely understood, even though most local people speak mainly Pidgin English. It's advisable to arrange a local guide, especially at Mt Austen near Honiara and on Tetepare, but self-guiding is possible on Rennell near the airfield, on Makira near Kirakira, on Ugi near Umara, and on New Georgia near Munda. Having previously been birdwatching in New Caledonia, Palau and various other Pacific Island countries, I can highly recommend the Solomon Islands as one of the best birding destinations that I have visited in the South Pacific.

Michael Szabo is editor of *Birds New Zealand* magazine.

This tour was organised by the Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau. For more information on visiting the Solomon Islands see www.vistisolomons.com.sb or email Brenden Mautoa: brenden.mautua@sivb.com.sb or Michael Szabo: editorbirdsnz@osnz.org.nz
To see more of Lars Petersson's bird photographs visit: www.larsfoto.se

Seasonal movements of Australasian Bitterns in the Hawke's Bay region

A Birds New Zealand Research Fund grant has been used since May 2015 to collect data on the seasonal movements of ten male Australasian Bitterns in the Hawke's Bay region. Data from this study has shown that male bitterns caught on Lake Whatumā during the breeding season (Sept- Nov) leave the lake as soon as breeding has finished (Dec-Jan). These data, which include three individuals that were followed across multiple breeding seasons, showed the exodus of bitterns occurred around the same time in both years.

However, for both of the seasons that we followed study birds, lake water-levels also dropped around the time that birds departed. This is likely to be problematic for bitterns as it concentrates their prey in the centre of the lake where there is no cover or reed-like vegetation for them to hide within while they forage, suggesting that bittern seasonal movements could also be food and resource driven.

When the birds left the lake, Birds New Zealand funding covered the fuel costs of Society members to re-find and follow most of these birds. In general, radio-tagged birds dispersed to spring-fed creeks and small ponds after leaving Lake Whatumā, with most of these sites being within a 15 kilometre radius of the lake. Seasonal patterns of the few individual bitterns that were followed across multiple seasons showed that they tend to return to the same sites during similar seasons as used in previous years.

We were unable to re-find all radio-tagged bitterns once they left the lake. After breeding at Lake Whatumā finished, at least three bitterns remained missing from the region until the next breeding season started eight months later, after which time most birds (including missing ones) returned to the lake. We still don't know for certain where these birds went in the meantime. However, as a rehabilitated radio-tagged bittern from Christchurch recently went missing and was re-discovered at a site over 100 kilometres from its last known location, we suspect our 'wayward' bitterns visit sites beyond the Hawke's Bay region.

EMMA WILLIAMS

Beach Patrol Data Entry Project progress

Very good progress continues with development of the Beach Patrol Data Entry Project, funded by the Projects Assistance Fund. Thank you for the continued enthusiasm and commitment of those members who are making such a sustained effort in this regard, and to the Dragonfly Data Science team in Wellington. We are moving closer to the time when data analysis can proceed based on a large high quality set of data that extends from 1951. Data entry through the home-based computers of members continues steadily using a double-entry process to ensure that a high quality database is produced.

This is one of New Zealand's longest running citizen science projects so all Society members are invited to participate and contribute to it. Project details are available from the website (www.osnz.org.nz). The following tables summarise progress up to September 2016.

IAN ARMITAGE

Form type	Keyed once	Double entered	Reconciled
Beach patrol card	25,133	7,574	2,937
Beach patrol data sheet	580	210	63
TOTAL	25,713	7,784	3,000

Sooty Shearwater	55,773	Little Penguin	43,390
Fairy Prion	40,870	Fluttering Shearwater	22,049
Prions (not identified)	20,182	Southern Black-backed Bull	14,947
Short-tailed Shearwater	10,878	Common Diving Petrel	10,236
Australasian Gannet	10,216	Broad-billed Prion	10,002

Binoculars review

Swarovski SLV 8 x 42; RRP \$2,800



The first things that struck me about these robustly built binoculars were the sharpness and brightness of the image, and the very wide field of view. Putting them through their paces in the field recently, the first challenge was identifying a white seabird in flight at sea off Kaikoura some 30 metres away while I was looking in the direction of the sun, which meant there was plenty of bright sunlight reflecting off the water

and the bird itself. The binoculars coped very well with the very high level of brightness and I was able to follow the bird as it banked left, glimpsing its head and bill in profile well enough to identify it as Antarctic Fulmar.

The next challenge was in moss-clad beech forest where the sky was overcast. Despite the low light conditions, I was able to see several Rifleman very clearly as they foraged on trunks and branches, some about 20 metres away, some as close as 3.2 metres. I lost track of a female bird in flight but found it again after it landed by a nest hole on a tree trunk further away, even though the bird was the same drab brown-green as the moss and the same creamy-grey as the trunk. The image detail was impressive, showing the pinkish colour of the feet and paler base of the bill very clearly.

By the time I reached the Homer Saddle the sun was shining brightly and reflecting off the snow. Here the challenge was to follow a Hobbit-sized Rock Wren as it bounded over the boulders and curtsied on top of rocks. At one point I lost track of it but then it reappeared on top of a rock and started singing, its head tilted upwards and its bill wide open, looking straight at me. The image was gin clear and I was able to see its long, pointed orange tongue and orange gape each time it opened its bill, details that I'd not been able to see so clearly before.

In summary, I found the SLV 8 x 42s to be high performance, user-friendly binoculars, especially for their excellent image detail and wide field of view. If you are considering binoculars in this price range my advice is to visit your nearest retailer to try them out for yourself. Over 70 retailers stock Swarovski optics in New Zealand. The NZ Ammunition website has contact details: www.nzammo.co.nz

MICHAEL SZABO

Trail cameras monitor small petrels in North Otago

The Birds New Zealand Project Assistance Fund has funded seven motion-activated trail cameras over three years at Katiki Point in North Otago to locate and monitor burrows used by small petrels there. Outcomes from the first year (2015/16 breeding season) produced mixed results. White-faced Storm Petrels and/or Common Diving Petrels were recorded beside only about three Sooty Shearwater burrows and Broad-billed Prions at only one burrow. A probable positive outcome was that we moved mammal traps in response to records of cats and mustelids on trail cameras, which may have contributed to a reduction in predation.

Thorough searches found 25 depredated small petrels through 2014/15 (five Broad-billed Prions, 13 White-faced Storm Petrels, seven Common Diving Petrels) but none through 2015/16. Unfortunately predation has not been eliminated, with two Common Diving Petrels depredated by mid-October 2016. This season (2016/17) we plan to enhance the likelihood of locating small petrels by broadcasting species-specific calls at burrow entrances and listening for responses. Hopefully this will facilitate an efficient use of the trail cameras and lead to an accurate census of small petrel nests at Katiki Point. CHRIS LALAS

Long Bay Oystercatchers

During summer you could once see Variable Oystercatchers or Torea raising their chicks on the beaches north of Long Bay, situated within the boundaries of greater Auckland. Unfortunately you couldn't see any Torea chicks in the Long-Bay Okura Marine Reserve in the summer of 2016 as none of the five territories between Grannies Bay and Okura Estuary successfully raised young because of a unilateral decision to amend a bylaw that restricted dog access to south of Vaughn Stream in 2014.

The effect of this decision can be seen in the numbers of young successfully fledged in the five breeding territories since 2009. Prior to 2014, five resident pairs produced an average of 1 to 1.25 young each breeding season (see table). In the following year the three territories nearest Long Bay all failed to fledge young. This included the Pohutakawa Bay pair who had been the most successful of the five, fledging nine young in the previous four years. The following year the two more distant territories also failed to fledge any young. The Okura Shellbank territory results are included in the table below for comparison.

So we have a fully protected endemic species living in a reserve here set aside to afford them protection and managed to promote and enhance biodiversity, whose local breeding population has been destroyed by a management decision carried out without proper consultation.

There will be a review of the bylaw changes allowing dogs on the reserve in 2017. Please contact Auckland City Council in support of a permanent ban on dogs. In the meantime, councillors Wayne Walker and John Watson have won a temporary ban on dogs there to protect the birds this breeding season from September until the end of March. Messages of support can be sent to them via this email address:

james.stephens@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

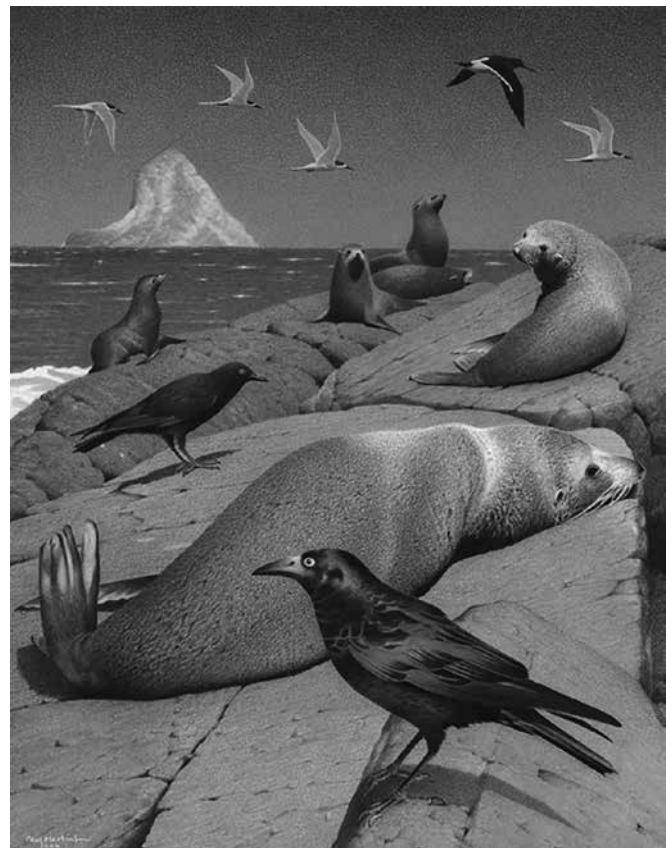
Numbers of fledged young

Season	Territory						
	OKURA ESTUARY	ROCK PLATFORM	PIRIPIRI POINT	POHUTAKAWA BAY	GRANNIES BAY	AVERAGE	OKURA SELLBANK
2009/10	-	1	1	3	-	1.25	2
2011/12	0	1	2	3	0	1.25	1
2012/13	0	1	1	2	2	1.25	2
2013/14	1	1	2	1	0	1.00	2
Unilateral bylaw change to allow dog access							
2014/15	1	1	0	0	0	0.40	2
2015/16	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	1

BERNARD MICHAUX

Request for feedback on colour-banding

The DOC Banding Office would like to improve the recording and reporting (as well as timely feedback) of colour-banded birds, and has developed two online surveys – open to birders, banders, and anyone who has reported a colour-banded bird. The first survey aims to collate information regarding projects that mark birds using colour bands, to improve recording and reporting of colour-banded birds through a searchable database. The second survey focuses on colour band suitability and shortcomings through providing a platform for you to report on your personal insights and preferences regarding the suitability and shortcomings of different colour band types (butt-bands, wrap-around bands, jesses, flags, alpha-numeric), materials (metal powder-coated, Darvic, Salbex, acetate, celluloid), colours, closing techniques (glue or solder) and suppliers. The survey can be found on the DOC Bird Banding website: <http://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/bird-banding/>



■ New Zealand Ravens at Fur Seal colony, Chatham Islands.
© Te Papa by Paul Martinson

Extinct New Zealand Raven was one species

A new DNA study of the extinct New Zealand Raven and Chatham Island Raven, published in *Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution* (2016), has found that they formed a single species with one or two subspecies, and were not two species with two subspecies as previously thought.

According to authors Paul Scofield and Vanesa Di Pietro (Canterbury Museum), Kieren Mitchell, Alan Cooper and Bastien Llamas (University of Adelaide), Jamie Wood (Landcare Research) and Scott Jarvie (University of Otago), the New Zealand Ravens were sister-taxa to a surviving clade comprising Australian Raven, Little Raven, and Forest Raven of Australia.

In the study – “The Origin and Phylogenetic Relationships of the New Zealand Ravens” – they estimate that the divergence between the New Zealand Raven and Australian Raven clade occurred in the late Pliocene, circa 2.6 million years ago, and that the divergence between the two New Zealand taxa probably occurred in the late Pleistocene, circa 12,000 years ago, making their separation as species within New Zealand untenable.

They also conclude that the morphology of the skull suggests Chatham Island Raven was unique among the genus *Corvus* and they suggest that it may have been an adaptation for a unique dietary specialisation: opportunistic scavenging at the vast sea lion rookeries that once lined the beaches of the North Island and eastern and southern South Islands and Chatham Islands.

Weighing up to one kilogram, New Zealand Raven was one of the largest songbird species in New Zealand before it became extinct at the time of human arrival. Like their Australian relatives, they were probably glossy black, omnivorous and aggressive. They had relatively long, slender legs, a long, broad and pointed bill, and retained the power of flight.

MICHAEL SZABO

FAR NORTH


The Far North Birds New Zealand prize for 2016 was awarded to Jack Kinghan for his study, "Comparison of Backyard and Forest Birds", which compared the bird species found in his back yard with those found in Puketū Forest (photo above). Supported by his mother, Jack made six visits to the Puketū Forest and made six observations of birds in his back yard, and compared the results. Jack won a fine pair of binoculars donated by Hunting and Fishing Kerikeri for his efforts. This is the third year that Hunting and Fishing and Birds New Zealand have donated a prize for the best Science Fair bird study.

A September pelagic trip produced 30-50 Common Diving Petrels in pairs spread over a wide area and small flocks of 10-20 Buller's Shearwater in flight totaling 300+. In deeper waters there were Black Petrels, Flesh-footed and Sooty Shearwaters, a Northern Giant Petrel, an Arctic Skua, pairs of Little Penguins, and White-faced Storm Petrels.

The 600+ Royal Spoonbills at Unahi Road have departed, the 64 Cattle Egrets are still there, and a Reef Heron was at Mangonui. Australasian Bittern have been seen or heard at Okiato, Orongo Bay near Russell, Haruru, Scudder's Beach, Aurere Beach swamp, Lake Ngatu, and Brott Road. One was seen in flight being attacked by a White-fronted Heron. After the attack, the heron forced the bittern to turn back. It was then joined by a second bittern on the return journey.

We counted 5 Bar-tailed Godwits on Ninety Mile Beach, where Little Penguin tracks were occasionally seen in the sand dunes, and noted that the migratory Welcome Swallows had departed. The Beach Patrol turned up a Wandering Albatross, a White-capped Mollmawk, an Australasian Gannet and a Hutton's Shearwater. In all, about 60 beach-wrecked birds were sent to Lauren Roman for analysis.

Waitangi Bike Park will be available to keen birders and cyclists during the 2018 Birds New Zealand AGM. Waitangi National Trust has invited Far North Birds to train a local group to do 5MBCs there, starting in November. Waitangi National Forest has an active conservation programme in place and claims to have the highest concentration of kiwi in New Zealand. - LES FEASEY

AUCKLAND

An adult Brown Booby was seen at the Muriwai gannet colony on 9th October. An unusual report was a possible Grey Butcherbird from Wellsford in mid-September made by an Australian visitor.

Unfortunately it was not reported for 2 weeks and has not been confirmed. At Straka's Refuge 2 pairs of New Zealand Dabchick were seen by Gwenda Pulham with 3 well-grown chicks on 20th October, as well as 22 New Zealand Scaup. A pair of dabchicks was seen with a chick at Harbourview, Te Atatu, and 7 pairs of Fernbird counted there on 8th October by Jeremy Painting.

Audio surveys of Te Henga wetland near Bethells Beach recorded up to 7 male Australasian Bitterns booming, numerous Spotless Crakes and - for the first time there - a Marsh Crake. New Zealand Dotterels have again bred inland in Albany, with the first chicks flying on 25th October. A Black-tailed Godwit and 8 Pacific Golden Plovers were seen at Oyster Point in the Kaipara Harbour on 1st October and a flock of 11 Pacific Golden Plover at Big Sand Island on 3rd October. A Little Egret has been present at Maungawhai Harbour over winter and was seen on 18th August at a high tide roost in a Black Shag colony with 14 Royal Spoonbills. A pair of Banded Dotterel was seen defending either eggs or chicks at Maungawhai on 18th August by Gwenda Pulham. Unfortunately the number of breeding pairs there has declined from a regular 6 or 7 pairs to 3 pairs.

Up to 5 pairs of Fernbird were recorded at the Pakiri River Mouth on 17th October. It is possible that predator control instigated to protect the New Zealand Fairy Terns that attempt to breed at Pakiri River mouth and Poutawa Stream mouth may be benefiting other species. This was highlighted during a recent beach patrol of 14 km of Pakiri Beach on 15th October which counted 62 New Zealand Dotterels, 53 Variable Oystercatchers, New Zealand Pipit, and numerous roosting Caspian Terns.

The Pakiri beach patrol produced a total of 30 birds of 11 species, including 9 Fluttering Shearwaters, 4 Buller's Shearwaters, 1 Flesh Footed Shearwater, 1 Sooty Shearwater, 1 Grey-faced Petrel, 4 Common Diving Petrels, 1 Fairy Prion, 2 Australasian Gannets, and 5 Little Penguins. A Muriwai beach patrol yielded a Light-mantled Sooty Albatross on 8th October.

Thirteen participants in the 10th annual survey of Motutapu Island on 8-9th October counted a total of 61 bird species. Numbers of North Island Saddleback, Whiteheads, Bellbirds and Red-crowned Kakariki have significantly increased.

Attendance by both members and the public has been excellent at the Ambury Park guided bird walks run jointly by South Auckland and Auckland branches, with 30 people on 18th September and 45 people on 16th October. Finally, we congratulate one of our young members, Oscar Thomas, for his excellent work as Campaign Manager for the Kokako, which won the title 'Bird of the Year 2016!' - IAN MCLEAN

SOUTH AUCKLAND

Terry Hatch reported the first Shining Cuckoos for the season on 31st August. On 6th August a group at Port Waikato helped Karen Opie set out Caspian Tern decoys with a sound system, check on the

Banded Dotterels, and set up the fence for the New Zealand Dotterels. The 2 pairs of Banded Dotterel banded last year and an unbanded pair were found. The Caspian Terns are nesting inside the sand mine again. Unfortunately the females from both of the banded pairs have not been seen since late September. On the other hand, 3 pairs of New Zealand Dotterels turned up, 1 laying an early clutch that should fledge before the Christmas crowds arrive.

Ian and Anna McNaughton organised access to the Awhitu Peninsula on 10th September. Highlights were Australasian Bittern and Fernbird at Awhitu Regional Park, a male New Zealand Scaup on the Twin Lakes at Douglas Road, and New Zealand Dabchicks on Lake Pokorua.

A visit to Kidd's Shellbank on 15th October was a chance to see recently arrived waders. Among the large numbers of Bar-tailed Godwits and Lesser Knots we spotted two Eastern Curlews, a Wandering Tattler, 6 Red-necked Stints and a Black-tailed Godwit in breeding plumage. An assessment of the harbour will be made on census day on 13th November. Census counts have already begun with the Firth of Thames counted on 6th November with a good turnout of people. Results have not been collated yet but David Lawrie reports 2 Pectoral Sandpipers and a Marsh Sandpiper at the Limeworks, and Tony Habraken mentioned 4 Cattle Egrets at Waitakaruru, some in breeding plumage. Black-billed Gulls have begun nesting there and at Mataitai so we will count them for the national census as soon as they are properly underway.

We recently begun monthly bird walks at Ambury Regional Park with the Auckland Branch and Manukau Harbour Restoration Society. Well-publicised, these are attracting interest from the public with up to 45 people coming along. - IAN SOUTHEY

WAIKATO

Notable sightings over the past quarter included 4 White Herons and 2 long-staying Black-tailed Godwits at Miranda. A flock of around 20 Cattle Egrets over-wintered again at Lake Ngaroto and Australasian Bitterns continue to delight observers at Old Wharf Road in Tokaanu, including 8 seen there by David Lawrie. The small Rookery recently established at Te Ko Utu Domain, Cambridge, has been 'dealt with' and is now gone. - RUSSELL CANNINGS

HAWKE'S BAY

In July a meeting was held to review work on the monitoring of Australasian Bittern populations. Use of eBird is not extensive locally so it was felt that somebody involved with eBird at the national level should meet with us to explain and review the way the system is set up. Possibilities for analysing data collected over many years of counting waders were also discussed and it was agreed that some preliminary work should be undertaken. In August we reinstated beach patrols at a section of beach between the Ngaruroro

River mouth and Tukituki River mouth.

The September field trip to the upper part of the Ahuriri Estuary was well-attended. In October we checked the lower Ahuriri Estuary, finding that Bar-tailed Godwit numbers had increased to around 170 with the influx of migrants, and unusually for here, a Lesser Knot. A Marsh Sandpiper was also seen at Westshore Lagoon.

A pair of New Zealand Dotterel are breeding at the Tukituki River Estuary with 3 eggs, a first for that location. Single male New Zealand Shore Plovers from the breeding population on Portland Island off Mahia Peninsula have also been seen there and at the nearby Clive River Estuary. And a Little Tern – uncommon in Hawke's Bay – has taken up temporary residence at the Clive Spit. – IAN SMITH

TARANAKI

South Taranaki beach patrols found little other than the usual Prion sp and occasional Fluttering Shearwater. Carol Keight spotted a New Zealand Falcon on two occasions close to her house. The local newspaper had a photo of a Kaka eating fruit from a tree in a garden just east of New Plymouth. Bill Messenger saw a White Heron near Awakino Gorge while driving north; then a few days later he had another sighting just north of New Plymouth. At local river mouths and estuaries Barry Hartley recorded 4 Pied Shags, 12 Royal Spoonbills at Mokau, a large number of White-fronted Terns, and rafts of 100+ Shearwater sp off the south coast.

A visit to Lake Rotokare recorded 22 species including New Zealand Tomtit, North Island Saddleback or Tieke, Fernbird, numerous Tui, and a few Whiteheads. The first Shining Cuckoo was heard on 22nd September by Marie Mitchell and Helen Elder; Helen heard 1 just 5 days later in a central New Plymouth park, but there have been no reports since. There were still 4 Cattle Egrets at Waiongana with 1 developing breeding plumage, some large coveys of Californian Quail, including 1 in excess of 50 birds, and the occasional albatross was seen offshore. Barry toured the local oxidation ponds and lakes seeing New Zealand Scaup, Australasian Shoveler, Coot and New Zealand Dabchick.

At the well-attended October meeting Carol Keight detailed the highlights of a recent trip to Northern Queensland where she identified over 90 bird species, including Southern Cassowary. On the October field trip to Pukekura/Brooklands Park we saw 25 species. The highlight was the Little Pied Shag colony where we counted a minimum of 19 nests. As this was the late David Medway's backyard he would have been pleased with the state of the only known Little Pied Shag colony in Taranaki. Just why they choose to nest in such a popular location remains a mystery. – PETER FRYER

WHANGANUI

Ormond Torr photographed a recently arrived adult Red-necked Stint on 18th August on the Whanganui Estuary. This was followed by the first Bar-tailed Godwit, seen on 9th September by Paul

Gibson, with up to 5 noted separately by Lynne Douglas and Des Bovey arriving during the following week. These arrivals seemed to be earlier than in previous years. A flag-marked male godwit, AJD, which has spent at least every summer here since December 2008, was seen on the Manawatu Estuary on 30th September by Phil Battley.

The first Shining Cuckoos were heard in mid-September in Levin (Joan Leckie) and Bushy Park (Peter Frost). Among the resident songbirds, the most interesting record was of 3 separate groups of Whitehead heard and seen in mid-September on two hillsides and in a *Macrocampa* grove at the junction of the Kauarapaoa Stream and Whanganui River. A flock of 40 Spur-winged Plovers was recorded flying over the Whanganui Estuary in mid-October, and there were further sightings of Redpoll, in Whanganui (late-September, Robyn Ogle) and at Bushy Park (mid-August, Peter Frost). – PETER FROST

WAIRARAPA

Now that Spring appears to have arrived, Shining Cuckoos are making landfall along the coast at the same places and, in at least one spot, on the same date as last year, and New Zealand Falcon sightings are increasing. A flock of Black-billed Gulls hasn't fixed on a breeding place yet, despite their relative success on the Tauherenikau Delta in Lake Wairarapa last year. Royal Spoonbills are lying low and Caspian Terns are starting to assemble again on Onoke Spit, where members Dougal and Denise MacKenzie monitor them faithfully.

At Riversdale Beach the New Zealand Dotterels are as challenged as ever. Strong seas have graded the beach quite flat, so nesting sites are vulnerable to king tides as well as the usual dogs and trail bikes. Banded Dotterels appear to be setting up shop with their usual enthusiasm at suitable river sites all along the coast, but there is not much news yet on Black-fronted Dotterels. Australasian Bitterns have started booming and John Cheyne very recently recorded 5 pairs of Spotless Crake in the wetland of Carter Reserve.

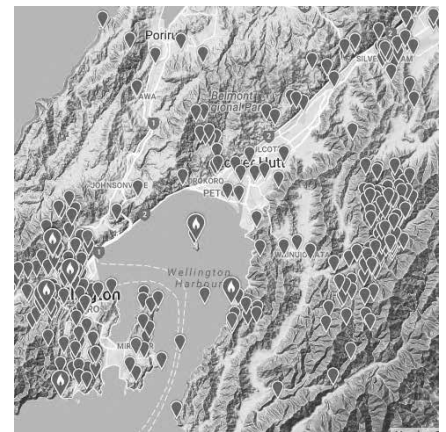
Each quarter we do a 'show and tell' evening and the one in October was really successful. Members have done the 5MBC course and attended a course at Wellington Zoo on how to handle injured birds and give/get it the correct attention. Jane Lenting brought us up to date with the strange world of hack releasing falcons. It seems they don't actually keep that many small birds off the grapes, but it's not a bad way of reintroducing falcons to an area. And we said farewell to our minute secretary, Juliana, who has flown south. – ROBIN LIST

WELLINGTON

The conservation status of the New Zealand Falcon or Karearea is Nationally Vulnerable. However, in the Wellington region in recent years sightings of New Zealand Falcon have been numerous according to eBird observations recorded in the region during 2011-2016. An interesting aspect of these observations is that a number of them were from urban and city locations, suggesting that birds are taking

advantage of a substantial food source – introduced urban birds. What is not clear is how many Karearea are present in this region, as numerous eBird observations are likely to be of the same bird. There are few eBird observations on breeding, which can provide valuable information on falcon numbers. Breeding has been recently recorded at Zealandia and at Tinakori Hill. These birds probably account for many – if not most – of the birds recorded in the Wellington city area. A concentration of observations east of Wellington harbour is from the Wainuiomata Mainland Island and environs, and was principally collected by Greater Wellington Regional Council.

– GEOFF DE LISLE



MARLBOROUGH

Kristin Ruwhiu has brought renewed vibrancy as our Regional Representative, on a mission to engage all members, bring new projects and revisit old ones. We included a beach patrol from Lake Grassmere intake to Marfell's Beach and a Marfell's pond count in our September meeting, seeing Banded Dotterel, Pied Stilt, Variable Oystercatcher and Australasian Shoveler. We found no beach-wrecked birds.

We were very fortunate to have an hour long viewing of several thousand Hutton's Shearwaters feeding just off the beach at Cape Campbell during our overnight trip in October. We were also treated to a flock of Ruddy Turnstones quietly moving along gleaning food items from among the rocks, and good numbers of Banded Dotterels in sandy paddocks next to the coast.

Bill has recently seen a Royal Spoonbill down at the Wairau Bar that was banded here in Marlborough in January 1995, some 20-years-old now. Over the years this bird has been spotted in Waianae, Collingwood, Farewell Spit and the Far North, so it is quite a traveller.

The national Black-billed Gull survey is happening at the moment, so if you see colonies, or banded birds in your area, please let Mike Bell (mike@wmil.co.nz) or Claudia Mischler (claudiamischler@gmail.com) know about them. Last but not least – and sadly – a friend, a loved family member, and a mentor of many, Brian Bell, passed away on 1st October. His quiet, retiring ways and open, sharing of knowledge are greatly missed.

– HEATHER DAVIES



NELSON

Updating news of the South Island Robin transfer from Adele Island to the Pitt Head Peninsula in Abel Tasman National Park, birds were seen regularly throughout winter until early spring. However, when it came time to start the intensive nest monitoring not one could be found. It is presumed that the birds thought to be resident had other ideas and dispersed. It is possible that some made it back to Adele Island, which is only 1 kilometre offshore, though none of these colour-banded birds have been seen at any distance from the release site yet. There was bad news for the Black-fronted Terns on the Waimea River where the colony was washed out by the wet weather in late October. There is better news, though, for the Australian Wood Ducks near Mapua that now have a clutch of 11 ducklings.

CANTERBURY

With the return of Spring, many migrant waders have arrived, including 4 Lesser Knots at Timaru's Washdyke Lagoon. Embankment Road has been a hotspot for migrants, with 6 reported visits since the end of August turning up a good variety of species. The first few waders began to appear in late August: a Red-necked Stint, Lesser Knot and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, and a Black Stilt with no leg bands. A few days later a Gull-billed Tern was seen, although the migrant waders were nowhere to be found. Then, in mid-October, larger numbers began to appear. Twenty-seven Red-necked Stints, at least 50 Wrybills, 4 Ruddy Turnstones, 3 Curlew Sandpipers and a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper were observed. Three visits the following week turned up many of the same species, although a lucky birder did find 11 Pacific Golden Plover as well.

Another highlight for Canterbury birders was a New Zealand Dotterel that made a seemingly brief visit to the Ashley Estuary on 28th August. Two White-winged Black Terns, 1 in almost complete breeding plumage and 1 in half breeding plumage, were seen at the Ashley a bit earlier that month. A final sighting of interest was that of a Little Tern, found at Bexley Wetland on 10th October, but not seen since.

Our ramble in August to N.C.F. Reserve in Kaiapoi turned up a good variety of songbirds, waders and waterfowl. Two Cattle Egrets were seen in the paddocks next to the stop bank, which was a nice surprise, and the highlight of the day. – ELEANOR GUNBY

OTAGO

Meetings have been very well attended with talks ranging from the birds of China with expert Lei Zhu and the birds of the Scottish Isles with Janet Ledingham. The movements of urban Tui and Bellbirds are being researched by Murray Efford with his dedicated colour-banding programme

of birds mist-netted in his backyard over the past 7 years: 368 Bellbirds and 403 Tui with 4,555 and 6,953 sightings, respectively! These data can also reveal male/female ratios, adult/ juvenile ratios, timing of moult, longevity (a Tui banded by Jim Wilson 15 years ago was recaptured this year) and annual survival rates.

Otago now has its own endemic shag, Otago Shag. Chris Lalas has been doing detailed research on the fluctuations in population, colonies and nest numbers in the region. A colony has formed on the old wharf in Oamaru Harbour with 235 nests in 2015.

There was a great turnout of 15 counters for the Sinclair Wetlands Spring survey. This is the start of the second year of surveys. We divided up into groups to do the 5MBCs and waterfowl counts, placing acoustic recorders to record any Australasian Bittern booms over the next two weeks, and looking for Fernbirds. The numbers of waterbirds on the ponds were very low, with New Zealand Scaup being the most numerous. Some Fernbirds responded rapidly and noisily to play-back of their calls; we had a tally of 9 birds seen on a 1 km transect. Brown Creeper was again picked up during the 5MBCs in the regenerating bush on the island. The morning finished with lunch near a pair of South Island Pied Oystercatchers with two young chicks.

– MARY THOMPSON

SOUTHLAND

After it was attacked by Australian Magpies, a New Zealand Falcon was rescued and sent on to the Wingspan Trust in Rotorua for rehabilitation. The falcon in

Queens Park was seen once again near the high school, harassing Black-billed Gulls.

Lauren Roman spent a productive couple of days in Southland examining seabirds collected by Lloyd Esler for her seabird plastic ingestion study. Short-tailed Shearwaters seem to have ingested the most from among the different species that she examined. We also took Lauren to Awarua Bay where she took photos of southern New Zealand Dotterels and a Red-necked Stint. A Large Sand Plover remained at the head of the bay for several days in September and Neil Robertson captured some good video footage which members are looking forward to viewing.

Richard Schofield from Balclutha reported 13 Cattle Egrets in the Titiroa area with several in breeding plumage and a Little Black Shag at the Invercargill Estuary lagoon. Furhana Ahmad reported hearing her first Shining Cuckoo on Stewart Island on 12th October.

A recent trip to Switzers walking track near Waikaia turned up California Quail, a species which seems to have spread southwards from Central Otago. An egg was found on the track and two birds were seen just minutes later. The habitat is ideal for these birds with the climate much like that of Central Otago.

We have a good number of wader counters available for our spring count and we should be able to cover most of the usual roost sites. Lloyd Esler reports that his regular beach patrols are turning up very few birds and this has been the case now for many months. Lloyd thinks the sea currents at Oreti Beach have changed, but where the birds are ending up is a mystery yet to be solved. – PHIL RHODES

Plastic ingestion in seabirds

In September 2016 I travelled to New Zealand to collect and necropsy seabird carcasses that had been collected by volunteers over the past 12 months from across the country. Hundreds of carcasses of 20 seabird species were collected. In August 2016 persistent storms west of Auckland caused a wreck of prions. Prions are one of the seabird groups that we are interested in, as we don't often receive them in large numbers, but those we do receive often have plastic ingestion. The wreck event affected predominantly Fairy Prion and Slender-billed Prion, and a small number of Salvin's Prion, Antarctic Prion and Broad-billed Prion, with a total of about 300 beach-washed prions collected. We found plastic ingestion among all prion species examined, all shearwater species examined, some petrels and none of the mollymawks. Salvin's and Slender-billed Prions had the most birds affected with greater than two-thirds of individuals containing ingested plastics. The highest number of items observed in a single bird was a sub-adult male Slender-billed Prion that had ingested 21 pieces of hard plastic. An adult male Short-tailed Shearwater took second place with 19 items of mostly hard plastic. The largest item we found was a piece of blue balloon ingested by a Slender-billed Prion. Of the 13 birds we examined from Ninety Mile Beach, we necropsied 11 Slender-billed Prions, an Antarctic Prion and a Common Diving Petrel. The Antarctic Prion had ingested one item of plastic and nine of the 11 Slender-billed Prions had ingested plastic, ranging from 1-9 items per bird. You can follow our research at: <https://www.facebook.com/seabirdsdebris/>

LAUREN ROMAN, University of Tasmania



▣ Kagu. Photo by Michael Szabo



▣ Horned Parakeet. Photo by Michael Szabo



▣ New Caledonian Imperial Pigeon. Photo by Michael Szabo



▣ Crow Honeyeater. Photo by Michael Szabo

New Caledonia – Crested Kagus and Horned Parakeets

The itinerary of Heritage Expeditions' **'South-Western Pacific Odyssey'** (1-18 April 2017) includes New Caledonia. I will be accompanying the expedition as a Birds New Zealand representative and excursions are planned from Noumea to nearby Riviere Bleue and Mt Koghi, both of which I am familiar with. It is possible to see some of the most sought-after endemic species at Riviere Bleue during a day visit. The most sought-after bird there is undoubtedly the flightless Kagu, a species in its own endemic family that looks like a ghostly grey-white cross between a heron and a rail. When it spreads its wings and raises its crest it resembles the South American Sunbittern, to which it may be distantly related. It also makes a hissing sound and has a call resembling that of a small dog barking.

Riviere Bleue is the best site for the enigmatic Crow Honeyeater, a large black crow-like bird with orange-red facial skin and a large slightly decurved bill, which give it a passing resemblance to the male Huia. Other larger endemic species that occur there include the tool-making New Caledonian Crow, the grey and rufous New Caledonian Cuckooshrike, the red-crowned New Caledonian Parakeet, and the vocal New

Caledonian Friarbird. The smaller endemic New Caledonian Whistler and Barred Honeyeater are often seen near the park headquarters.

North of Noumea is forested Mt Koghi, where it is possible to explore trails through the rainforest and see the iridescent Metallic Pigeon, the very large New Caledonian Imperial Pigeon, and the unusual Cloven-feathered Dove. It is also worth checking trees by the car park near the top for the multicoloured Horned Parakeet and South Melanesian Cuckooshrike. From here the Point de Vue track connects to a nearby radio mast lookout which can be a good place to watch for the New Caledonian 'Blue' Goshawk.

Coconut Lorikeet, Green-backed White-eye and Dark-eared Honeyeater are fairly easy to see in Noumea itself, and a variety of tropical seabirds are possible at sea in New Caledonian waters, including noddies, boobies and frigatebirds. Among the rarer species that occur at sea are New Caledonian Fairy Tern, Gould's Petrel, and the as-yet undescribed New Caledonian Storm Petrel.

To make a booking please telephone Heritage Expeditions on **0800 262 8873** or send an email to: info@heritage-expeditions.com

MICHAEL SZABO, Editor



BIRDING EXPEDITIONS

Birds New Zealand

Heritage Expeditions and Birds New Zealand are offering Birds New Zealand members the opportunity to travel to the world's best birding destinations. Started by Christchurch biologist Rodney Russ over 25 years ago, Heritage Expeditions was born out of the belief that New Zealand's precious wildlife must be protected for future generations. Travel aboard the 50-berth *Spirit of Enderby* and share in the wonder of these special destinations with an expedition team comprising of experts in their field including birding guides, biologists and historians.

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