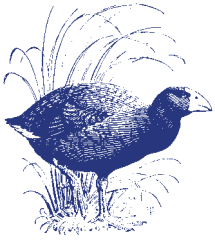


No. 11 September 2016

Birds New Zealand



The Magazine of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand



Birds New Zealand



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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 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: **Fiordland Crested Penguin or Tawaki** in rainforest between Haast and Lake Moeraki. Photo by Douglas Gimesy, New Zealand Birds Online.



▲ New Zealand Falcon, Auckland Islands (see story on page 7). Photo by Tony Whitehead, New Zealand Birds Online.



▲ New Zealand Falcon, South Island. Photo by Glenda Rees.



David Lawrie (right) and Bernie Kelly (centre) during the bittern tracking workshop at Waitangi wetlands, Hawke's Bay, 5th June.



The Boundary Stream field trip, one of three options on 6th June.

President's Report

Annual General Meeting Weekend

Early in June the AGM weekend was held in Napier. The event was extremely well organised by Bernie Kelly and his small team of volunteers, and there was a really good turnout with about 160 people registered. This was one of the Society's largest conferences, and it was held in one of the smaller regions.

It is clear from the presentations that ornithological research in New Zealand is in a fine state, with excellent talks from a large number of students, researchers and really keen amateurs. It was great to see the influence that the Birds New Zealand Research Fund has had and I hope that the sponsors can reflect on all the benefits there are to ornithology from the papers presented by those who have received grants.

As President, the other pleasing aspect was hearing all the wonderful positive comments made by attendees. This augers well for the future of the Society and is a reflection of the hard work put into its activities by the Council and the Regional Representatives. During the conference the invitation was made by Neil Robertson (Southland), for the next one to be held in Te Anau at the start of June 2017. This promises to be another interesting conference and I would urge people to keep the dates free in their calendars.

Heritage Expeditions

You will notice an advertisement placed by Heritage Expeditions on the back cover of this edition, which the editor has arranged. This company is no stranger to the Society having generously donated a travel prize which was awarded at our 2012 annual conference in Tauranga. Many of our members have travelled with this company, including myself, and their journeys to remote wild places are always fascinating. As can be seen from the advertisement, for each member who travels on one of these journeys a donation is made to the Society's activities, so please be sure to tell them that you are a member if you intend to travel with them. And if you do, please don't forget to provide a report to our magazine editor—with photographs if possible.

Manukau Harbour Forum

A forum was held on 10th June to identify key issues and outcomes that will impact and restore the Mauri or life-force of New Zealand's second larger harbour, the Manukau. This was a very well attended event that involved a number of informative presentations. The harbour is of great interest to Birds New Zealand because it is the most populated shorebird habitat in the country. It is also surrounded by New Zealand's largest city, hence the number of threats is increasing.

Awards were presented to acknowledge those groups that have contributed to the restoration and preservation of the wildlife and ecology of the harbour. One such award was given to Birds New Zealand for undertaking 55 years of bird

monitoring in the harbour, which has contributed knowledge relating to the use of the harbour by shorebirds and has enabled the identification of the key areas for them, and which Ray Clough and I accepted on behalf of the Society. This was a worthy recognition of the many hundreds of people that have been involved in undertaking the biannual counts on the harbour over that period.

A small group of people, including Birds New Zealand members, are undertaking preliminary investigations into establishing a nature centre in the Mangere area. An easily accessible centre would provide an opportunity for raising awareness of the importance of the harbour and, indeed, all estuarine areas. This also has some measure of importance because Transit NZ is investigating the option of a new motorway around the fringes of the Onehunga Basin, which could have impacts on bird life in that area. The Department of Conservation is presently investigating the potential effects in association with Birds New Zealand members.

Department of Conservation Banding Officer

I have invited DOC's new Banding Officer, Michelle Bradshaw, to provide a regular update on her activities and areas where members could assist, the first of which is in this edition. The Society has always enjoyed a close working relationship with the Banding Office, but this is the first time they have been given an opportunity for regular contact with our members. I would urge all members involved in banding activities to contact her if they have any concerns or issues because banding is a core activity that the Society undertakes.

Branding Review

Helen Taylor, one of our newly elected Councillors, has accepted the role of revising the website and all of the Society's marketing and social media presence. This matter was discussed at the combined Council and Regional Representatives meeting and Helen has been given authority to consider all aspects of the Society branding, including the logo. While no decisions have been made yet, Helen will consider all options and report back to Council and before any major changes are made the membership will be consulted. This is part of the push by Council and the Regional Representatives to make the Society more relevant to younger people and to have a greater presence in our day-to-day activities.

Projects and Activities Committee

This committee has been convened by Peter Frost for a number of years, with limited uptake by regions. The recent Youth Camp and Red-billed Gull surveys are two notable exceptions. At the recent Council meeting it was decided to disband this committee and to replace it with a Youth Liaison Committee (YLC), and

to thank Peter Frost for his efforts with the P&A Committee. Sharon Alderson, one of our newly elected Councillors, has been appointed as the Convenor of the YLC and she is looking for people prepared to assist her in initiating activities that can help to attract younger people into the Society. This was indicated in our forward planning as a key area that Council needs to be active in finding ways to include younger members. If members have any relevant ideas please contact either Sharon or myself.

Annual Accounts

As announced at the AGM, the annual accounts for the year had not yet been audited due to the need to appoint new auditors as a result of the new rules which now apply. I have been advised that the accounts are still with the auditors, but are nearly finalised. There have been no issues with them, it is just the requirements to present the information in a different manner that is delaying completion. It was hoped to have a summary in this edition, but this will now be in the next one.

Notornis

There has been a delay with the September edition of *Notornis*, hence it will not be included in this posting. This may mean the issue of two editions close together, or a larger combined edition in December. This matter will be considered by Council at the October meeting.

DAVID LAWRIE, President



▲ Ian Southey presents Tony Habraken with his Meritorious Service Award.



▲ Colin O'Donnell receiving the Robert Falla Memorial Award from Vice President Bruce McKinlay at the 2016 AGM in Napier.

Society Awards 2016

Colin O'Donnell was awarded the Robert Falla Memorial Award in recognition of his long service to the Society, including contributions to bird study in the New Zealand region from 1977 to 2012, Convenor of the Records Scheme (1989-2000), membership of the *Notornis* Editorial Board (2001-2005) and major publications from 1980 to 2015.

Peter Reese was awarded a Meritorious Services Award for his contributions to ornithology and his work for the Society, including starting the Wellington Passerine Banding Group which for 15 years held regular mist-netting and banding sessions which several hundred people attended.

Tony Habraken was awarded a Meritorious Services Award for his contributions to ornithology and his work for the Society, specifically being a core member of the South Auckland Branch of OSNZ for nearly as many years as he's been alive. He has been the Convenor of the South Manukau Branch and Firth of Thames censuses since 1994, and a key factor in the success of the OSNZ wader movement project.

John Khouri was awarded a Meritorious Services Award for his contribution to the Society for the annual audit of the Society's financial accounts over many years. He also provided a great deal of assistance to the Society's previous Treasurer, Mark Nee, and the current Treasurer.

New Zealand National Bird Banding Scheme

Michelle Bradshaw was appointed as the DOC Banding Officer in April 2016, and – ably assisted by Sandy Taylor as the Casual Administrator – is in the process of improving various systems and processes within the Banding Office, including Certification, Technical Advice, Training, Administration, Communication, Equipment and, in particular, focusing on an overhaul and replacement of the Banding Database. However, none of this will be very useful without building a relationship with the bird banding community, so feel free to contact Michelle to introduce yourself as she welcomes queries, suggestions, or even just a quick “hi”. Her background is in marine conservation and research, having worked on seabirds, sharks and marine mammals. She is a certified seabird bander with the African Bird Ringing Scheme, and has attached and recorded bands and devices on various species of seabirds around the world.

Contact details

The Banding Office will be at Level 6, Nokia House (13-27 Manners Street) until February 2017 during earthquake strengthening. During this time the landline phones are not accessible, but the email and postal addresses remain the same:

Banding Office: bandingoffice@doc.govt.nz;

PO Box 108, Wellington 6140

Michelle Bradshaw: mbradshaw@doc.govt.nz;

mobile: 027 201 3593

Sandy Taylor: sataylor@doc.govt.nz; mobile: 027 201 3281

Banding certifications

The Banding Certification System of the New Zealand National Bird Banding Scheme (NZNBBS) ensures that banders are competent and follows the Bird Bander's Manual that describes the legal framework and the standards and details of “best practice” that are to be adhered to in New Zealand. Please note that the Bander Certification is a measure of competency issued under the NZNBBS and is a requirement that is separate from, and in addition to, permission to capture, handle and band birds through the Wildlife Act Authorisation (previously “Banding Permit”). Existing Banding Permits are still valid until their expiry dates. For more information, please contact permissionshamilton@doc.govt.nz.

Banders can be certified at different levels for different species groups with appropriate restrictions (for example, you can be L3 for parrots, L3 for passerines restricted to robins, as well as L2 for waterfowl and L1 for other species). The Banding Advisory Committee now assesses certification applications on a monthly (rather than annual) basis, provided that all the required supporting information has been submitted to the Banding Office. All L1 and L2 banders should use the NZNBBS Bander Training Log to record their banding experience. This needs to be signed by the L3 banders overseeing their banding and submitted together with letters of endorsement from L3/expert banders when applying for certification assessment. There are currently 375 Competent (L2) and Expert (L3) certified banders, and a combined total of 1,400 certifications across all species groups and certification levels.

Trainee Banders (L1) – including L2 and L3 banders that are obtaining banding experience on a species group that they are not currently certified for – are under-represented, as they were not included in the database in the past. Michelle would like all Trainee Banders to register with the NZNBBS for the species they are (or would like to be) working on, so that they can be added to a Banders' Mailing List and be informed of training opportunities, banding updates, and equipment offers through a Banding Newsletter. MICHELLE BRADSHAW



▲ Photo by David Lawrie.

New Birdwatching Location Maps

Want to know a good place to watch birds near where you live or on a visit to another part of New Zealand? In conjunction with "Spot X", Birds New Zealand has produced a set of six birdwatching maps covering the country from Parengarenga Harbour in the Far North to Mason Bay on Stewart Island.

The maps are printed on a water-proof, tear-proof plastic that should withstand many years of use in the field. Three maps each cover the North Island and the South Island/Stewart Island, with 20 or 21 sites per map. One side of the map shows the area covered, with an X marking the locations of the various sites. The other side gives a brief description of each site and details which birds may be seen there, or the general area nearby.

Maps are provided (usually topographical) with one or two Xs marking either the best birdwatching spot at the site or the access point to the area. The best times of year, tide and so on to visit a site are generally suggested, along with notes on any limitations at the site, access, footwear and finding special birds there. Using these maps it should be possible to guide yourself to locations where you can see a large proportion of New Zealand's bird species.

The maps sell for \$11.90 each or \$50 for a set of six, with proceeds going to the Birds New Zealand Projects Assistance Fund. They are currently available for sale through the Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust shop, either in person or online, or online through other sources.

The intention of the project was to make it easier to find New Zealand's important birdwatching sites. With the information available it is hoped more visits to these sites will add to their future protection and that of the birds found there. So pick up a map, enjoy your birding... and please post what you see on eBird to add to the ornithological record.

NICK ALLEN

Donations and Bequests

Birds New Zealand is working hard to ensure a better future for birds across New Zealand, but to do this the Society needs your help.

Make a donation

The Society is a registered charity (CC 41020) and tax credits are available for donations made in New Zealand. You can donate in the following ways:

- Post a cheque to our Membership Secretary
- Deposit funds into our BNZ bank account: 02-0290-0164715-00
- Make a credit card payment via PayPal (send payments to membership@osnz.org.nz)

Leave a gift in your will

No matter how much it is, leaving a gift to the Society in your will really does make a difference. All funds received go into the Projects Assistance Fund, so you can be confident that your gift will have a real impact and that our birds will have a voice now and into the future.

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

- *Specific Legacy.* You may wish to leave a specific amount of money, shares, bonds, items or a nominated gift to the Society.
- *Residuary Legacy.* You may wish to leave a gift of all or part of your net estate (what remains after all taxes, specific gifts to family and friends, and the cost of administering the estate have been paid). This type of legacy should be expressed as a percentage or share of your estate.

Falla Memorial Award, A.T. Edgar Junior Award and Meritorious Service Awards

Nominations are called for these awards and should be with the OSNZ Secretary (P.O. Box 834, Nelson 7040) by 31st December 2016. Nominations should be made on the standard forms, which are available from Regional Representatives, or the Secretary secretary@osnz.org.nz

The Awards Committee will consider all nominations and its recommendations will be forwarded to Council for consideration at its spring meeting. Further information on OSNZ award procedures is available from RRs or the OSNZ Secretary.

2017 Membership Renewals

Subscriptions are due on 1st January 2017. Members with an email address will receive a membership renewal form via email. Members who do not have email (or who have not informed the Membership Secretary of their email address) will 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.

The Gift of Birds

Are you looking for that perfect Christmas gift? Gift someone a 2017 Birds New Zealand subscription for just over a dollar a week to help foster a lifetime of study, knowledge and enjoyment of birds.

Email eo@osnz.org.nz and we will send you the gift voucher or visit our website for more details: <http://www.osnz.org.nz/perfect-gift-voucher>



Conference Abstracts

Winds of change for Mottled Petrel

Accelerated climate change is a threat of increasing importance that confronts seabirds and is known to cause shifts in prey source availability. As apex predators, seabirds are vulnerable to shifts in the food web and prey availability drives population success. Gadfly petrels (genus *Pterodroma*) are a group of small to medium sized seabirds with a broad distribution throughout the world's oceans. The endemic Mottled Petrel (*P. inexpectata*), once ubiquitously distributed throughout New Zealand, is now limited to breeding on predator-free islands around the Southland region.

Analysis of movements gathered through telemetry and 'delta 13 carbon' values from the whole blood of adult Mottled Petrels provides evidence of a novel high-latitude foraging niche during chick-rearing, atypical of *Pterodroma* species studied to date. During four consecutive seasons experiencing very different environmental conditions (La Niña, El Niño, neutral) this study tracked the spatial ecology, provisioning regimes and diet of breeding Mottled Petrels during the chick-rearing period, and documented chick growth from hatching to fledging of Mottled Petrel breeding on Codfish Island/Whenua Hou.

Data indicate that La Niña conditions during 2013 resulted in poor chick condition and slow growth, likely a result of lower provisioning frequencies and low value prey sources, when compared to other seasons. Conversely, preliminary evidence from 2016 indicates that El Niño conditions were associated with greater chick condition and growth rates, likely attributed to higher provisioning frequencies during this season. Differences in spatial distribution of breeding adults during these seasons will be discussed. These findings highlight the value of inter-annual studies and provide evidence to suggest that Mottled Petrel may act as proximate indicators of ecosystem functionality in the Southern Ocean. The Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2015 funded the costs associated with the stable isotope analysis of bone/fossil and blood samples of Mottled Petrels. R SAGAR, BJ DUNPHY, MC STANLEY, MJ RAYNOR

Nest-site selection in South Georgian Diving Petrels on Codfish Island

The sole remaining colony of the South Georgian Diving Petrel (SGDP) in New Zealand is now restricted to a single site, the Sealers Bay dunes, Codfish Island (Whenua Hou).

Despite the eradication of all introduced predators on the island, the colony is showing little to no population growth. To better understand potential factors preventing population recovery we assessed dune parameters critical to the nest-site selection of SGDP. To achieve our objective, we determined burrow occupancy using toothpick fences, play-back, hand capture, and burrow traps during the 2015/16 nesting season. Based on these methods, we identified 74 active SGDP nests, six active nests of Common Diving Petrels (*P. urinatrix*; CDP) and four active nests showing mixed occupancy.

Subsequently, we measured five physical and six biological variables at known nest sites as well as 131 random sites in the dunes. Using an Information Theoretic Approach (AIC_c), we showed that SGDP preferred mobile, steep, seaward-facing foredunes. Furthermore, our results showed that invasive vegetation, distance to conspecifics, and other seabirds did not influence SGDP nest site selection. We discuss the nest-site selection of *P. georgicus* in detail and the implications of their findings for the conservation management of this threatened species. The research was supported by the Department of Conservation, Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2015, Dunes Restoration Trust of New Zealand, Centre for Biodiversity and Ecological Restoration, and Australasian Seabird Group.

JOHANNES FISCHER, IGOR DEBSKI, GRAEME TAYLOR, HEIKO WITTMER



▣ Rebecca Hohnhold with a Chatham Island Brown Skua. Photo by Henrik Schultz.

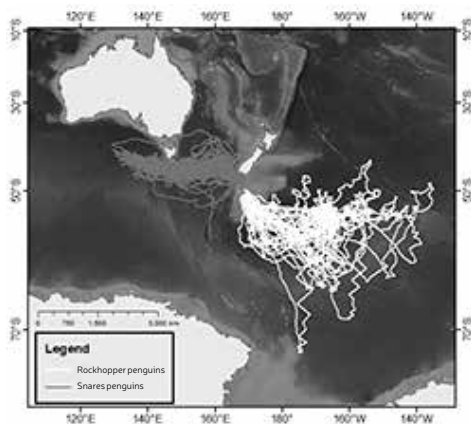
Wintering areas and activity patterns of Chatham Island Brown Skuas

Brown Skuas (*Catharacta antarctica lonnbergi*) are large predatory seabirds that are uncommon in New Zealand.

They have been subject to intensive research at their major breeding site, the Chatham Islands. This research has focussed on breeding success and mating systems, but little is known about their distribution and behaviour outside of the breeding season. While they have been reported to be year-round residents at the Chatham Islands, recent observations found skua territories deserted during winter. It is therefore unclear whether Chatham Island Skuas migrate or not and whether their wintering behaviour has changed in recent years. Because the skua population on the Chatham Islands is thought to be declining, such information is crucial for effective species management and conservation. Technological advances and miniaturisation of tracking devices enabled us to follow skua movements during the non-breeding season.

We deployed archival geolocation loggers on 30 nesting birds during the 2014/15 breeding season. Based on ambient light levels these devices estimate two locations per day and also record daily patterns of activity via a saltwater immersion sensor. Thirteen successful device recoveries in the 2015 breeding season revealed the first insights into migration routes, wintering areas and activity patterns of Brown Skuas from the Chatham Islands. We found that all 13 birds indeed left the island during winter, remaining pelagic mostly in subantarctic waters for about five months before returning to their breeding territories in spring. We deployed another batch of light loggers, which we hope to recollect in October 2016. Data from these additional devices will show whether wintering patterns persist across consecutive seasons. This research was funded by the University of Auckland, JS Watson Trust, and Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2015.

HENDRIK SCHULTZ, CRAIG MILLAR, ANNE GASKETT, REBECCA HOHNHOLD, STEFANIE ISMAR, GRAEME TAYLOR, SARAH BURY, TODD DENNIS



▲ Winter migration routes of Eastern Rockhopper Penguins and Snares Crested Penguins. Tracking map by NIWA.

▲ Eastern Rockhopper Penguins, Campbell Island. Photo by Paul Sagar.

Two subantarctic penguin species make marathon winter ‘migration’

A team of New Zealand scientists has tracked two subantarctic breeding penguin species ‘migrating’ up to 15,000 km within the Southern Ocean over a six month period spanning winter and spring. The research project, led by NIWA seabird ecologist Dr David Thompson, tracked 90 subantarctic breeding Eastern Rockhopper Penguins and Snares Crested Penguins to find out where they go while at sea between April and October each year, which was previously unknown.

The picture that emerged from the tracking data they gathered was that the Snares Crested Penguins swam exclusively west towards waters south of Australia, while the Eastern Rockhopper Penguins from Campbell Island swam east and covered an even wider section of ocean (see map), with several birds covering over 15,000 km. The tags also determined when the penguins were stationary, indicating when they stopped to dive for food or rest.

While the naturally uncommon Snares Crested Penguin population is relatively stable, the Eastern Rockhoppers at Campbell Island have declined dramatically over the past 75 years. It is hoped that the new research will help explain

why Campbell Island’s rockhopper numbers declined by 94% between 1942 and 1984, and by a further 21% since then, leaving just over 33,000 breeding pairs on the island. Campbell Island once had the world’s largest breeding colony of rockhoppers but the species is now listed as nationally critical.

“They come to land to breed and when they finish that, go back out to sea where they feed up for a month. Then they come back to land to sit and moult their feathers. During that period they don’t eat at all. Having basically starved themselves they go back out to sea in poor condition. They’ve grown a whole new set of feathers so their plumage is fantastic but it’s quite demanding so they’re really scrawny. We think winter is pretty important and that there is almost certainly something going on in the ocean causing the population to decline,” says Dr Thompson.

Dr Thompson plans to repeat the tracking project with other species such as the Erect Crested Penguin of the Antipodes Islands to see whether they use different spaces in the ocean during winter, or if populations from different islands congregate at sea.

New Zealand Falcon has two distinct subspecies

A new study suggests there are two subspecies of the endemic New Zealand Falcon or Kārearea rather than three, as previously thought. The study, published in *IBIS*, the *International Journal of Avian Science* in August by Massey University Professor Steven Trewick and postgraduate student Lena Olley, describes how the boundary between the two distinct lineages coincides closely with the Cook Strait.

The authors examined the body sizes and neutral genetic markers of Kārearea and found strong evidence suggesting two distinct sizes, with the South Island form being larger than the North Island form. They name the two forms *Falco novaeseelandiae novaeseelandiae*, from the South Island, and *Falco novaeseelandiae ferox*, the smaller North Island form.

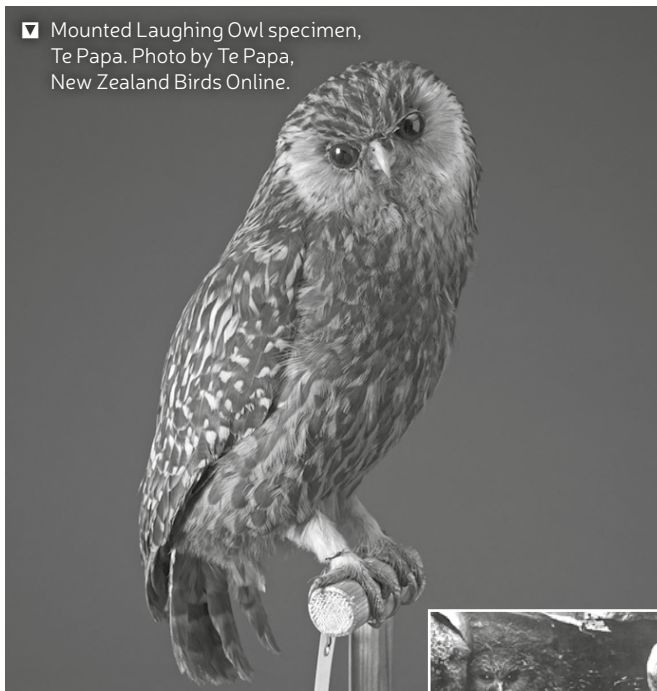
“Kārearea vary considerably in size and colouration, over and above the differences between the males and females that are typical of raptors, and this variability has caused confusion since its earliest observation in the 1870s,” says Professor Trewick of the Institute of Agriculture and Environment. “Differences in size and other attributes among spatially separated populations could represent adaptation to local conditions and by recognising

two distinct subspecies in Kārearea, we will be able to identify the patterns of diversity within the species and understand the distinct evolutionary ecology of each.”

“Remarkably the boundary between the size clusters coincides closely with the Cook Strait, which is a geologically young feature of the New Zealand environment. This finding supports an informal conservation management strategy to avoid translocation and crossbreeding in captivity of falcons from the two islands,” said Professor Trewick.

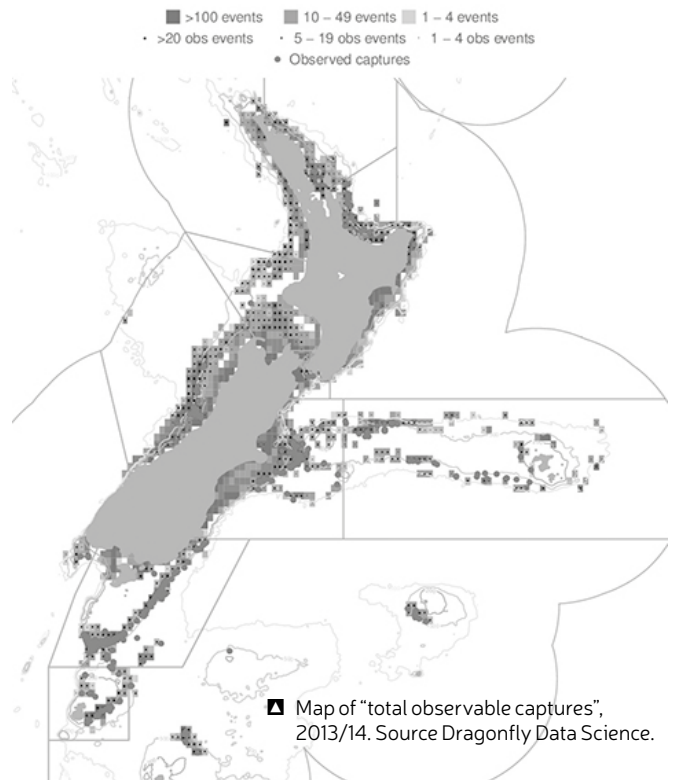
Kārearea are capable of flying at over 100 km/h and of killing large prey, including South Island Takahe, and are classified as Nationally Vulnerable. The Department of Conservation estimates there are between 5,000 and 8,000 Kārearea left, but this number is uncertain.

The new study, entitled “Spatial size dimorphism in New Zealand’s last endemic raptor, the Kārearea *Falco novaeseelandiae*, coincides with a narrow sea strait”, was supported by the Department of Conservation through assistance with sampling and a grant from the Taxonomic Units Fund. See photos on page 2.



✔ Mounted Laughing Owl specimen, Te Papa. Photo by Te Papa, New Zealand Birds Online.

✔ Young Laughing Owl with rodent at its nest in a cavity, Raincliff Station, Opihi River, South Canterbury, 1909. Photo by Cuthbert and Oliver Parr.



✔ Map of "total observable captures", 2013/14. Source Dragonfly Data Science.

Extinct Laughing Owl was related to Morepork

A new DNA study of the extinct Laughing Owl published in the *Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society* (August 2016) provides strong support for this species being placed in the Hawk-owl genus *Ninox* as sister taxon to the clade containing Barking Owl (*N. connivens*), Sumba Boobook (*N. rudolfi*), and Morepork or Ruru (*N. novaeseelandiae*).

Accordingly, the authors, Jamie Wood (Landcare Research), Kieren Mitchell and Alan Cooper (University of Adelaide), Paul Scofield and Vanesa Di Pietri (Canterbury Museum), and Nic Rawlence (University of Otago), have changed the Latin name from *Scleroglaux albifacies* to *Ninox albifacies*. The study also placed Laughing Owl earlier in the group relative to Morepork, suggesting that it was perhaps the first in a double invasion of New Zealand by the same Australasian owl lineage.

Bone analyses and a comparison of the wing and leg proportions of the Laughing Owl with those of other owl species found that it had relatively long legs, which supports John Gould's (1865) contention that it was largely a terrestrial owl species that predominantly caught prey on the ground. This was further supported by the relatively high abundance of terrestrial prey remains preserved in sediment deposits at former Laughing Owl nest sites. This is consistent with a terrestrial lifestyle, including ground foraging for flightless or ground-adapted prey found on the forest floor such as seabirds, flightless birds, bats, lizards, frogs and weta, which are known to have been included in its diet.

About twice the size of the Morepork and weighing around 600 grams, it was one of the heaviest *Ninox* species after the Australian Powerful Owl (up to 1,700g) and the Australasian Rufous Owl (up to 1,300g). However, despite being a relative heavyweight, the Laughing Owl appears not to have lost its ability to fly before it became extinct.

The species' common name referred to its call, which was described by a contemporary naturalist as a "loud cry made up of a series of dismal shrieks frequently repeated". Its loud and varied repertoire of calls also included "doleful shrieks" and a barking noise "just like the yelping of a young dog".

Thousands of seabirds killed in NZ fisheries in 2013-2014

An estimate has been published of the number of seabirds that were killed as 'bycatch' in New Zealand commercial fisheries in 2013-2014. An estimated 2,277 seabirds were killed in the Jack Mackerel trawl fishery during this period, including threatened species such as Salvin's Albatross and White-chinned Petrel.

Seabirds are often reported as bycatch in commercial fisheries by government observers placed on some commercial fishing vessels to record any protected species bycatch incidents that they witness while on duty. The data gathered by these observers are maintained by the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) and the identification of captured seabirds is carried out by the Department of Conservation. These observers are only present on some fishing vessels, though. So in order to estimate the total number of captures in a fishery, statistical methods are needed to extrapolate from observed fishing to unobserved fishing.

A new analysis conducted by Wellington-based Dragonfly Data Science now gives a figure for the "total observable captures", which is an estimate of the captures that would have been reported if observers had been present on all commercial fishing boats. The analysis also notes that there may have been additional mortalities, such as birds being hit by fishing gear cables that were not brought on board and recorded. Data shows that during 2013-14 there were 512 observed captures of all birds in trawl fisheries, including 125 Sooty Shearwaters, 105 White-chinned Petrels, 71 White-capped Albatrosses, 45 Salvin's Albatrosses, 35 Buller's Albatrosses, 19 Flesh-footed Shearwaters, 11 Grey Petrels, nine Westland Petrels, and eight Black Petrels.

Red-footed Booby gets green light

Two records of Red-footed Booby at Napier Island recorded on 31st March by Tim Barnard and others during a Heritage Expeditions trip to the Kermadec Islands and submitted to the RAC have been accepted, which means these were the first and second New Zealand records of this species.



▣ Fiordland Crested Penguins returning to burrows through rainforest between Haast and Lake Moeraki. Photo by Douglas Gimesy, New Zealand Birds Online.

Tawaki Project maps Fiordland Crested Penguins' foraging behaviour

The Tawaki Project is a five-year project to study the marine ecology of the Fiordland Crested Penguin or Tawaki across the species' entire breeding range. We study the penguins' foraging movements and diving behaviour using miniaturised GPS dive loggers during the chick rearing period in late winter/early spring. After a successful pilot study in the 2014/15 season, we expanded our study focus to include a second study site in Harrison Cove, Milford Sound.

Between 14th September and 13th October the project operated with two teams that deployed GPS dive loggers simultaneously at both sites. This field work coincided with the occurrence of one of the strongest El Niños on record and the effects of the climate phenomenon appeared to have significant effects on the penguins at both study sites.

At Jackson Head we recorded high chick mortality throughout the entire duration of our stay. Of the 34 Tawaki nests we monitored between mid-September and mid-October, 25 nests failed. Since Tawaki generally only raise one chick to fledging, only nine chicks remained by the time field work concluded. The main cause for the chick deaths was starvation and/or inadequate food supply. Dissection of four chick carcasses showed that the birds contained mud, stones and bits of vegetation in their stomachs, or they were clogged up with squid beaks which cannot be digested.

Nest attendance patterns and foraging ranges of adult penguins were significantly longer than what we recorded during the pilot study in the previous year. During the first

weeks after hatching, only the female penguin goes out to search for food for the chicks. While in the previous season females returned every night to feed their chicks, this year they stayed at sea for up to three days. Some birds spent less than 30 minutes at their nest sites before departing on another foraging trip. During these trips, the penguins travelled up to 100 km away from their colonies (foraging ranges in 2014/2015: 10-20 km). Clearly the feeding conditions off Jackson Head were very poor.

This proved to be diametrically different in Milford Sound. At Harrison Cove we found 16 active nests, all with healthy chicks. Four nests even had two chicks. That both chicks survive is highly unusual as one of the chicks is generally out-competed by its sibling during feeding and dies a few days after hatching. However, the food situation in Milford Sound seemed to be exceptionally good. The female penguins hardly left Harrison Cove and only few birds ventured towards the fiord entrance, which is only 9 km from the colony. The average foraging range of 11 tracked penguins was <2 km.

The project is a collaboration of University of Otago, Global Penguin Society, Department of Conservation and West Coast Penguin Trust supported by Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2015. Continuing the research over the next three years will allow us to examine how foraging behaviour varies under different conditions and to assess the species' resilience to environmental change. Further information: www.tawaki-project.org THOMAS MATTERN



▲ Rock Wren (male), Gertrude Valley, Fiordland. Photo by Craig McKenzie.

Rock Wren bounce back in the Homer-Gertrude area

Rock Wren in the Homer Saddle and Gertrude Valley are making a comeback thanks to a predator trapping project run by the Southland Section of the New Zealand Alpine Club (SSNZAC). The Rock Wren population in the area was in catastrophic decline in 2012 and a team of DOC researchers found that all their nests were being attacked by predators. To protect them, SSNZAC set up a predator trapping programme which currently has 20 single 'DOC 200' traps and 20 double traps in the Upper Hollyford and Gertrude Valleys that are checked nine times per year.

The number of Rock Wrens in the area is now steadily increasing. The Department of Conservation (DOC) has been monitoring the population and has found that since 2013 the number of breeding pairs has increased from ten to 33. Around 85% of Rock Wren nests are successful in fledging young in areas with predator control. In contrast, in areas where there is no predator control, nesting success is 0–30% and populations are at risk of extinction, according to DOC.

"Our trapping programme is a team effort by SSNZAC, Fiordland Tramping and Outdoor Recreation Club, Hokonui Tramping Club and Southland Tramping Club, assisted by DOC," said SSNZAC Committee member Stanley Mulvany.

DOC Fiordland Operations Manager, Greg Lind, said Rock Wren monitoring results show the positive outcomes that can be achieved by community groups co-operating and taking action for conservation.



▲ Rifleman (female), Mavora Lakes, Fiordland. Photo by Glenda Rees.

Rifleman transferred to A'Deane's Bush

Friends of A'Deane's Bush in Hawke's Bay have a goal of establishing a viable population of Rifleman or Titipounamu (*Acanthisitta chloris*) at the 40 hectare A'Deane's Bush lowland podocarp site over five years.

Fifty-nine birds were transferred in autumn 2014 after being caught each morning over three days at Boundary Stream and then flown by helicopter to A'Deane's Bush, Makaretu, each afternoon. In the three months after the transfer, only 14 (20%) were found at the transfer site, although in that time they had dispersed throughout the bush.

Monitoring over the first breeding season found three nesting pairs and subsequently found fledglings of those pairs, plus two other adult birds with fledglings. Overall, ten adults and 15 juveniles were seen during the first breeding season and the survival rate of the founding Titipounamu was calculated to be at least 17% after 16 months.

The summer of 2015/2016 was quite a successful breeding season there and five pairs with fledglings were found. Then it was decided to go ahead with a 'top-up' transfer, so in April 2016 a further 31 birds were translocated there. The most recent monitoring in May and June 2016 found 15 newly released Titipounamu and 22 resident birds.

Friends of A'Deane's Bush thank their major sponsors, John and Jay Benton, the local Ashley Clinton Makaretu community—especially Sherwood School—and the Department of Conservation staff for their support throughout the process.

KAY GRIFFITHS



▲ Rifleman (male), Mavora Lakes, Fiordland. Photo by Glenda Rees.

Study clarifies evolution of New Zealand wrens

A DNA analysis of Rock Wren (*Xenicus gilviventris*), Rifleman (*Acanthisitta chloris*) and three of the five extinct species of New Zealand *acanthisittid* wrens has been published which clarifies the group's ancient evolutionary history. The study also provides "compelling evidence" that the New Zealand landmass was not completely submerged under the ocean around 21 to 25 million years ago during the Oligocene, which may change current theories about the country's geological and evolutionary past.

The study, which used ancient and modern DNA data, estimates the timescale of the group's evolution, and allowed the authors to reassess their relationships based on both genetics and morphology.

The study confirms a close relationship between Rifleman and an extinct Miocene wren (*Kiurnis indicator*). It reveals the extinct Stout-legged Wrens (*Pachyplichas*) diverged relatively recently from a more slender (*Xenicus*-like) ancestor. And it suggests a possible Early Oligocene origin of the basal Lyall's Wren (*Traversia*) lineage, which would imply that *Acanthisittidae* survived the Oligocene marine inundation of New Zealand's landmass and therefore that the inundation was not complete.

Published in the journal *Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution* (102, May 2016), the research was led by the University of Adelaide's Australian Centre for Ancient DNA (ACAD) and conducted in collaboration with the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Canterbury Museum and the Department of Conservation.

The *acanthisittid* wrens are a group of largely flightless tiny bird species found only in New Zealand. They are called wrens because of their similarity in appearance and behaviour to the largely New World "true wrens", but they do not belong to the same avian family. The Maori name for Rifleman is Titipounamu and Maori names for Rock Wren include Piwauwau, Matuitui and Tuke.

The *Acanthisittidae* was the earliest family of songbirds to separate from the rest of the passerines, and so are considered to be the sister group to all of the other songbird species so far described in the world, which account for around a half of all the 10,000 living bird species.

"Of the seven NZ wren species living before humans arrived in New Zealand, only two now remain, the Rock Wren and the Rifleman," says lead author Dr Kieren Mitchell, Postdoctoral Research Associate in the University's ACAD. "Consequently, little is known about their evolution."

"Most surprisingly, we found that some of the *acanthisittid* wren species were only distantly related to each other, potentially sharing a common ancestor over 25 million years ago," says Dr Mitchell.

"Previously, researchers have suggested that New Zealand was completely submerged 21 to 25 million years ago, which implies that all of New Zealand's unique plants and animals must have immigrated and diversified more recently than that time."

"This theory is consistent, for instance, with what is known about moa, where the different species all shared a common ancestor much more recently than 21 million years ago. But the ancient divergences we found among the *acanthisittid* wrens suggest that they have been resident in New Zealand for more than 25 million years, and possibly as long as 50 million years (when New Zealand became disconnected from the rest of the Gondwana supercontinent)."

"As the *acanthisittid* wrens were largely very poor fliers, or even flightless, some land must have remained throughout that period. This has important consequences for our understanding of the evolution of New Zealand's unique ecosystems."

As well as being the sister-taxon to all other perching birds (*Passeriformes*), the *acanthisittid* wrens – including the recently extinct species – represent the most diverse endemic songbird family in New Zealand.

MICHAEL SZABO



1) Yellowhead by Ron Enzler, New Zealand Birds Online.
 2) Whitehead by Duncan Watson, New Zealand Birds Online.
 3) Brown Creeper by Nicholas Sherlock, New Zealand Birds Online.

Mohoua beauty in the eye of the beholder

The amazing array of bird plumage and egg colours has long fascinated poets and scientists. However, the colours that humans see are not the same as those that birds see because all animals detect colour by absorbing reflected light energy using vision associated proteins called 'opsins'. Different opsin proteins differ in the range of light wavelengths that they can absorb which, in effect, means that animals can only 'see' wavelengths of light that can be absorbed by their particular set of opsins. They are simply unable to see light that their opsins cannot absorb.

Typically, placental mammals have two different opsins which absorb mainly in the green and red parts of the spectrum ('two-colour vision'), with the notable exception of some primates, including humans, which have three different opsins and three-colour vision (blue/green/red). In contrast, birds have four different opsins providing 'four-colour vision'. They have an additional, ultraviolet (UV) light absorbing opsin that allows them to see UV light, which is largely invisible to mammals. Such UV vision is important for birds in foraging for food, selecting mates and egg/offspring recognition.

Recently a group of Kiwi and American scientists comprising Andrew Fidler, Zachary Aidala, Michael Anderson, Luis Ortiz-Catedral and Mark Hauber published on the subject in *The Wilson Journal of Ornithology* (Vol. 128, No. 1, March 2016) after finding genetic evidence that the UV light detecting opsins of two New Zealand endemic species from the South Island, Yellowhead (*Mohoua ochrocephala*) and Brown Creeper (*M. novaeseelandiae*), are non-functional. This means that these two species have almost certainly lost their ancestral ability to 'see' UV colours and are left with three-colour vision similar to that of humans. The third member of the *Mohouidae* family, the Whitehead (*M. albicilla*) from the North Island, appears to have normal bird 'four-colour vision'. Why the Yellowhead and Brown Creeper should have lost their UV vision during evolution is unclear.

The authors of the study, entitled "Pseudogenisation of the Short-wavelength Sensitive 1 (SWS1) Opsin Gene in Two New Zealand Endemic Passerine Species: the Yellowhead (*Mohoua ochrocephala*) and Brown Creeper (*M. novaeseelandiae*)", speculate that the loss of UV vision was linked to these two *Mohoua* species needing to discriminate the colours of their own eggs from those of eggs laid in their nests by Long-tailed Cuckoos (*Eudynamys taitensis*). Subsequent differences in colour perception among these three *Mohoua* species may have altered mate choices and played a role in why the three *Mohoua* species all differ so much in their plumage colours.

The full genomic sequence of the Yellowhead has also recently been determined at the Beijing Genomics Institute as part of the ambitious B10K project (<http://b10k.genomics.cn/>). Analysis of this full genome sequence, and then those of the other two *Mohoua* species, will provide information on the functioning of the other opsins and, perhaps, genes involved in feather and egg colouration.

In recent years genomic technologies have helped scientists shine light on long-standing questions in avian natural history. One conclusion with *Mohoua*, as with humans, is that beauty really is in the eye of the beholder.

ANDREW FIDLER



4) Hihi (male). Photo by Tony Whitehead, New Zealand Birds Online.
 5) Dr Helen Taylor working at her mobile lab.

Are male Hihi firing blanks?

Threatened species that have experienced extreme population bottlenecks often exhibit low genetic diversity and an elevated risk of inbreeding and inbreeding depression, all of which contribute to extinction risk. In New Zealand, multiple species have experienced population bottlenecks as a result of invasive predators and habitat loss, but also via founding new populations using conservation translocations. Hihi or Stitchbird (*Notiomystis cincta*) are an excellent example of this paradigm, having been translocated to Tiritiri Matangi Island in 1995-96, at which point they experienced a population bottleneck, with only 16 of the 51 birds translocated (including just four females) actually contributing to the current population of ~150.

Recent research suggests that inbreeding in Hihi is linked to poor hatching success, but it is not yet clear exactly how much of this hatching failure is due to male infertility. We collected sperm motility (swimming speed) and morphology data for 82 male Hihi on Tiritiri Matangi Island using a mobile laboratory designed especially for this project. We have combined this data with pedigree and genetic data to seek out links between inbreeding and male fertility in this species. We will discuss the implications of our findings for species management and explain how the techniques implemented here could be extended to provide data for a wide range of bird species.

This research, which was presented at the 2016 Conference, is funded by the Birds New Zealand Research Fund and is part of a larger study involving several endemic and introduced New Zealand bird species.

HELEN TAYLOR, PATRICIA BREKKE, NEIL GEMMELL



▣ Waipu Sandspit, looking south. Photo by Michael Szabo.



▣ New Zealand Fairy Tern. Photo by Michael Szabo.

Birding Places – Waipu River Estuary

The scenic views of Mount Manaia and the Hen and Chicks Islands on a clear day make a visit to Waipu River estuary in Northland well worthwhile. Ornithologically it is the breeding New Zealand Fairy Terns that are the biggest drawcard, and this is probably the most accessible place to see our rarest endemic bird species.

The Fairy Terns that breed at Waipu Sandspit between September and February have a supporting cast of White-fronted Terns and Caspian Terns, and it is sometimes possible to see our smallest breeding tern species in flight alongside our largest.

Fairy Terns can often be seen resting on the sandspit or hovering over the estuary during the breeding season. If you time a visit for December you may even see a newly fledged juvenile in flight or being fed by a parent while resting on the mudflats.

It's also worth checking any terns here because vagrants are occasionally found. A Crested Tern was seen in December 2014 and a Little Tern in 2001, with Common and Arctic Terns also a possibility among the White-fronted Terns.

New Zealand Fairy Terns are the *davisae* subspecies and their total population currently numbers around 40 individual birds, with an average of nine breeding pairs. The tiny size of their population explains why their New Zealand threat classification is nationally critical.

New Zealand Fairy Terns are known to be different from Australian Fairy Terns and New Caledonian Fairy Terns in a number of ways but current work shows that they are more different than had been realised so that they seem to be a distinctive local species.

Following recent protection by DOC and volunteers, New Zealand Dotterels and Variable Oystercatchers are present here in relatively large numbers. South Island Pied Oystercatchers are also present from late summer to late winter. Banded Dotterels breed in significant numbers and White-fronted Terns often breed near the northern end of the sandspit.

Waipu Estuary is also a regular site for Arctic migrant shorebirds during the New Zealand spring and summer. Most are Bar-tailed Godwits, Lesser Knots and Ruddy Turnstones but occasionally these species are joined by Pacific Golden Plover, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Far Eastern Curlew and Red-necked Stint. Rarer records include Terek Sandpiper (2005), Western Sandpiper (1999), Common Greenshank (2001), Pectoral Sandpiper (1992), Curlew Sandpipers (1994), and Whimbrels (1990s).

Other species that are either resident or breed here include Australasian Bittern, Australasian Harrier, Paradise Shelduck, Banded Rail, Sacred Kingfisher and Fernbird. Reef Heron,

White-faced Heron, Royal Spoonbill, Pied Shag and Pied Stilt are seen fairly regularly on the estuary and there are a few older records of Little Penguin, Wrybill and Shore Plover.

Seven Australian Pelicans visited the estuary in September 2013, almost certainly from the larger vagrant flock seen in Northland in 2012/13. More recently, three Cattle Egrets were seen by Johnson Point Road in September 2015 and then four in the same area in November 2015, so you never know what may turn up here.

Site summary

The estuary includes mudflat, saltmarsh and mangrove habitats and is enclosed by the sandspit which extends five kilometres from Waipu River mouth to the sandy beach at Waipu Cove. The sandspit has a low-lying tip on the southern side of the river mouth and stable dunes with spinifex, pingao and sedgelands.

Best time of year to visit

Spring and Summer, September-February. After the breeding season, New Zealand Fairy Terns disperse to winter on Kaipara Harbour. Arctic migrants are here through the same period until March/April. The various other resident species breed during spring and summer.

Best time of tide to visit

Two hours either side of low tide. Ideally, close to low tide when it's easiest to wade from the car park to the sandspit.

Where to see New Zealand Fairy Terns

Waipu is just off State Highway One. From Waipu, drive three and a half kilometres south-east on Cove Road then turn left into Johnson Point Road. Follow this for 500 metres until it ends next to the estuary and park there. From the car park use your binoculars to scan the estuary in both directions looking for New Zealand Fairy Terns flying or hovering over the estuary, or resting on the mudflats. Please respect their fragility by not approaching them too closely. They are relatively confident, so with care you should be able to watch them without significant disturbance from 50 metres away. Taped-off areas with DOC signage protect the nests of New Zealand Dotterels and New Zealand Fairy Terns on the sandspit. Please do not go inside any taped-off area and be sure to abide by the rules set out on the DOC signage at the car park. One of the reasons that they are now so rare has been interference by people, so please do not disturb them by approaching too close.

MICHAEL SZABO



▣ Johannes Fischer with South Georgian Diving Petrel in the hand on Codfish Island/Whenua Hou. Photo by Claudia Babirat.



▣ Hugh and Zoe Clifford.

Australasian Seabird Group

The Australasian Seabird Group (ASG) is jointly run by Birds New Zealand and Birdlife Australia. ASG compliments the activities of its parent organisations by providing a forum for those with a particular interest in seabirds, funds small grants for Australasian seabird research, and supports student attendance at conferences. The group also organises a seabird symposium with Australian and New Zealand presenters at each of the biennial Australasian Ornithological Conferences (AOC). For each AOC ASG offers travel grants to graduate students working on seabirds. In 2015 one was awarded to Della Bennet (University of Canterbury) who is studying Hutton's Shearwaters.

Every second year, ASG offers research grants which usually go to students whose projects will contribute to the knowledge or conservation of seabirds in New Zealand or Australia. In 2016 both recipients were enrolled at New Zealand universities. Johannes Fischer (Victoria University) is studying South Georgian Diving Petrel on Whenua Hou/Codfish Island. Tess Cole (University of Otago) is using genomic sequencing to reveal relationships among the crested penguin complex, where cryptic species are possible. Four of the seven species of crested penguins currently recognised breed in New Zealand, three of which are endemic.

ASG produces an excellent e-newsletter filled with articles on current research and conservation matters relating to seabirds, which is produced by Kiwi Rachael Sagar. The New Zealand representatives on the ASG committee are Dr Susan Waugh (susan.waugh@tepapa.govt.nz), Alan Tennyson (alant@tepapa.govt.nz) and Kerry-Jayne Wilson (kerryjayne1@hotmail.com). ASG's only income is members' subs, which is invested in seabird research and conservation through supporting the emerging generation of seabird researchers. Those with an interest in the seabirds of our region are encouraged to join ASG. The annual subscription is \$A22 and you can join online at: <https://support.birdlife.org.au/sig-membership-australia>

KERRY-JAYNE WILSON

Biodiversity "Beyond Orokanui" in East Otago: note of thanks and erratum

The Landscape Connections Trusts would like to thank Kelvin Lloyd and Des Smith of Wildland Consultants Ltd, who managed the data collection, analysis and reporting. The Trust would also like to pass on an enormous thank you to the many Birds New Zealand volunteers from Dunedin. Without their effort and enthusiasm this project would not have succeeded. The article in the previous edition erroneously attributed the Maori name Miromiro to South Island Robin when it is in fact Toutouwai. The editor apologises for this.

Hugh Clifford

On retirement the qualities that had made Hugh's professional life a success were applied to ornithology. He played a very full part as a member of the Waikato Branch of OSNZ, spending six years as Secretary/Treasurer and three as Regional Representative. He was also a Council member of the Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust for five years.

His involvement in field work aligned perfectly with his love of the outdoors. He invested a great deal of time in the OSNZ Atlas of Bird Distribution and this was recognised by a joint award from the Society to both Hugh and Zoe Clifford. There was also overseas commitment to the Tanga'eo Project in the Cook Islands and conservation of Gould's Petrel in Australia.

At the age of seventy he committed to a course of study for the Graduate Certificate in Ornithology, an Australian qualification involving distance and residential learning.

His greatest ornithological love was for seabirds. For 23 years he participated in the OSNZ Beach Patrol Scheme and for the last 11 of these he was the Convenor for Birds Waikato. Over that period he undertook 595 beach patrols and covered 3,005 km. The real distance was much greater as return journeys do not figure in the statistics.

The OSNZ-sponsored Grey-faced Petrel Project is his greatest legacy. Hugh led the Project for nearly 20 years, being co-leader with Paul Cuming for the last two of those. A large number of people were involved but Hugh's involvement far exceeded that of any other participant. A whopping 7,275 Grey-faced Petrels were banded in that period, which involved Hugh in 105 day visits and 307 night visits to Mauao Island and Motuotau Island. As an adjunct to this huge longitudinal study translocation, techniques were trialled that were subsequently used to conserve the Chatham Island Taiko.

Hugh's contribution to ornithology up until his passing on 8th June 2016 was considerable and he received recognition from many quarters. He has left us a great legacy and memories of a rather unique and gentle man.

RAY BUCKMASTER

Study reveals diving behaviour of Black Petrels

A new study by Elizabeth Bell of Wildlife Management International has been published in *Notornis* (Vol 62, Part 2, June 2016) describing for the first time the diving behaviour of Black Petrels, the threatened seabird species at greatest risk from commercial fishing in New Zealand waters. Diving data for 22 Black Petrels breeding on Great Barrier Island (Aotea) was obtained from electronic time-depth recorders during January-February 2013 and 2014 with maximum dive depths varying among individuals from 0.8m to 34.3 m. The majority (86.8%) of dives were no deeper than five metres and (92.7%) during the day. This information could be used to improve mitigation measures to reduce Black Petrel bycatch in longline fisheries, particularly in relation to recommended depths for unprotected hooks and line sink rates.



▣ 2016 AGM attendees, Napier.
Photo by Les Feasey.

Minutes of the 77th Annual General Meeting of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc)

Held in Napier on 4th June 2016 at 4pm

Present

78 + members and friends.

Apologies

Enfys Graham, Chris Robertson, Mike Bell, Betty Seddon, David and Ruth Crockett, Nigel Milius, Tony Habraken, Keith Owen, Carol Davies and Peter Langlands.

"That the apologies be accepted" **Rosemary Heather/Les Feasey.**
Accepted

Minutes of the 2015 AGM

"That the minutes of the last AGM, having been circulated, be accepted as a true record of that meeting." **Biz Bell/Bruce McKinlay.**
Accepted

There were no matters arising.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's Report was read by Paul Garner-Richards. The financial statement and report from the Treasurer had been circulated to the meeting. This confirmed that the statements had not yet been audited, but this was in progress. The Treasurer informed members that John Khouri, the Society's previous auditor, had to stand down due to changes in rules of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Australia & New Zealand. A new auditor, Simon Danson of Nelson Marlborough Audit Ltd, was proposed to members to audit the accounts.

Our finances are in good shape. David Melville asked about developing an 'out year' budget to determine what the Society's costs will be in future and how it will meet them, and suggested that looking at membership categories and/or membership subscription increases may be necessary. Members were informed that the Treasurer and Vice-President are engaged in an exercise to attempt to forecast future costs. Council is expecting an increase in costs due to one extra Council meeting each year and the increased EO workload.

'Recommended by the AGM that the Treasurers Report and financial statements presented be accepted and that Council get the accounts audited as soon as possible.' **Paul Garner-Richards/Wendy Goad.** Accepted

'Recommended by the AGM that members and Council thank John Khouri for his service conducting the annual audit of the Society's financial accounts for many years.' **Peter Frost/David Melville.** Accepted

'Recommended that the AGM appoint Simon Danson as Society auditor for the next financial year.' **Paul Garner-Richards/Bruce Postill.** Accepted

President's Report

The President firstly asked if members would stand for a moment and remember those from the Society who had died over the past year. He then reported that Council has introduced a March meeting so topics can be dealt with in more depth, and that this is working well. Members were introduced to new Council members, Sharon Alderson and Helen Taylor, and new Membership

Secretary, Jill West. Roger Sharp was acknowledged for keeping the membership database going. The President then introduced the new editor of *Birds New Zealand* magazine, Michael Szabo, and the new editor of *Notornis*, Dr Leigh Bull, the first woman editor of the journal. He also acknowledged Jim Briskie for his eight years of service as editor of *Notornis*.

The President then reported on all Society activities over the past year. Scheme Convenors present at the meeting spoke to their reports and thanked members for their support. The President commented on projects funded by BNZRF, from T-Gear NZ Charitable Trust, who have doubled their yearly donation. He thanked the Executive Officer, Ingrid Hutzler, for the good management of these projects and the PAF projects. He also noted the benefits of the projects funded from these funds such as the birding maps which are now on sale, with all proceeds to go back to the PAF. Members were also updated on Fruzio's sponsorship arrangement with the Society which is contributing funds towards national projects such as the Red-billed Gull and Black-billed Gull surveys, and the Youth Camps. The Executive Officer commented that Fruzio appreciated the voluntary work done to date by those members involved.

The President spoke about the scheme reports and the meeting recorded its thanks to all scheme convenors. Acknowledgment was expressed to Ben Bell for his 35 years dedication to the moult scheme in which 6,000 records of 133 species have been recorded. He also talked spoke the growing interest of younger people in being involved with the Society, in particular the 'Young Birder' followers that Council keeps in regular contact with and invites to give input to Council meetings and to attend conferences. The meeting then recorded its thanks to all scheme convenors and to elected officers, and to the continuing services of the executive officer.

'That the meeting accept the President's report.' **David Lawrie/Sandy Bartle.** Accepted

'Formally acknowledge thanks to T/GEAR, Andrew Styche (Youth Camp), Paul Scofield (eBird), Ben Bell (Moult Scheme), Jim Briskie (former *Notornis* editor)'. **Peter Frost/Helen Taylor.** Accepted

Action-President to follow up these acknowledgements with a letter.

Society Awards

The Vice-President acknowledged past Fellows of the Society and presented current awards. (See page 4.)

General Business

Neil Robertson summarised the general arrangements for the next conference in Te Anau in 2017. It was noted that in 2018 it would be hosted in Northland. Michelle Bradshaw, the new Banding Officer at the Department of Conservation, was introduced to members. Banding Liaison Officer David Melville thanked Michelle for taking on the role. Sandy Bartle thanked Graeme Taylor and David Melville for resurrecting the issue and keeping it going through to a solution. The President thanked members for attending. The meeting closed at 5.15pm.



▲ Injured Barn Owl, Kaitaia area.

FAR NORTH

Four dead Barn Owls were found in the Kaitaia area and west of Whangarei during July/August and an injured Barn Owl rescued by Kevin Mathews from Peria. Noel Hyde from the Wingspan Trust took it to Rotorua where the Trust now has 2 females and a male in captivity.

Questions have been asked recently about how many Barn Owls are living in the wild in the Far North. Kevin reports that one was found with a broken wing in 2008 and a breeding pair was found the same year. Trail cameras have been installed at the original breeding site near Kaitaia and it is fairly reliably observed that they have 2 (perhaps 3) clutches a year with 2-4 eggs per clutch. One can calculate how many eggs have been laid since 2008. How many of these hatched, fledged and grew to adulthood to breed is only speculation until a survey can be carried out. Given the 5 Barn Owls recorded recently, one suspects that the population is well established and quite numerous.

We have had two significant beach wrecks of prions recently in which about 60 birds were recorded. Most were Fairy Prions, with some Broad-billed Prions and Thin-billed Prions among them, plus a White-headed Petrel. Another significant find was a dead Channel-billed Cuckoo found at Spirits Bay on 6/8, which was sent to Te Papa where its identity was confirmed by Colin Miskelly.

Royal Spoonbill numbers in the Far North have increased dramatically. This year's migration resulted in over 650 birds roosting at the end of Unahi Road north of Awanui, up from about 400 birds 2 years ago. There aren't sufficient roosting spots for all of them so some have moved further north where the population in Houhora Harbour has expanded from 20 to 80 birds. The Unahi Road Cattle Egret population has also expanded from a few birds to about 60. The White Heron and Little Egret that we have seen in previous years are also present there.

Kaka have reappeared after an absence, with 3 birds seen in Diggers Valley, south of Kaitaia. A Laughing Kookaburra has been heard calling in the Inlet Road area of Kerikeri and Weka have been occasionally reported in town having previously been confined to the Russell area. – LES FEASEY

NORTHLAND

Three areas were counted during the North Kaipara Wader Count on 25th June. There were 2,090 South Island Pied Oystercatchers at Simpson Road, Ruawai, and 110 White-fronted Terns sheltering on the wharf at Tinopai. The greatest number counted on the day was the 3,456 tally from the Ruawai area.

Individual sightings over the previous month included a Reef Heron at Tutukaka; an Australasian Bittern at Ruakaka wetland; 8 Cattle Egrets at Mangawai South; 2 Kereru at Whau Valley Wetlands; a Reef Heron at Johnson Point; 28 Royal Spoonbills at Waipu Creek; and 300 Royal Spoonbills at Waikaraka, Whangarei Harbour.

At our May meeting Jack Crow spoke of his time on Pitcairn Island supervising a pest eradication programme. In June, Tutukaka conservationist, Mike Camm, told us about the Tutukaka Landcare Coalition which fosters the reintroduction of threatened native species such as Pateke (*Brown Teal*) and North Island Brown Kiwi and the considerable success they have enjoyed since their pest eradication operations started. And in July, a keen bird photographer from Whangarei showed us their photos of New Zealand Falcon and Rifleman taken in the South Island.

– JANET SNELL

AUCKLAND

The Auckland region has had a wet winter so far, resulting in some temporary wetlands appearing. One is a large freshwater lake on Mangawai Spit where, on our census day (11th June), 3 New Zealand Dabchicks were seen along with 13 Royal Spoonbills and, for only second time at the site, a Grey Teal. An Australasian Little Grebe took up residence at a pond in Albany on 24th June that has proved to be a popular subject for photographers. In addition to the usual Mangere Water Treatment Plant winter flock, dabchicks have also been seen at Gambles Dam, east of Te Hana (16), Strakas Refuge (8), Lake Kereta in Muriwai lakes (8) and Auckland Airport Wetlands (1).

On 7th May, Helen Smith and Ian Southey accounted for half of the current world population (circa 43) of New Zealand Fairy Terns over the same high tide period at Papakanui Spit and Big Sand Island. Spring tides push New Zealand Fairy Terns into these two roost sites over the autumn/winter months and a total of 24 birds were seen again at these two sites during the Kaipara Wader Census on 25th June.

A New Zealand Dotterel at Mission Bay on 18th February was the first sighting there for many years and perhaps the result of the species' high annual productivity in the Auckland region, which currently stands at 0.82 chicks per breeding

pair. Other sightings included 4 Ring-necked Parakeets in the Mt Albert area on 13th May, 3 immature Brown Boobies seen briefly at Muriwai Gannet colony the same day, and a Little Egret seen by Phil Hammond at Mangawai Spit on 21st July.

Wader censuses were undertaken in June. The southern Kaipara Harbour recorded over 200 Royal Spoonbill and 5 species of tern, including 2 Black-fronted Terns, while a Kaka was seen at South Head. An interesting sighting at Papakanui Spit was a Banded Dotterel that had been banded at Port Waikato during the summer, indicating some local seasonal movement of that species. In the northern Manukau Harbour, 259 Royal Spoonbills were counted, with 650 out of the 670 Wrybills recorded roosting on a warehouse roof near Mangere Inlet.

Only a small number of birds were found wrecked at Muriwai Beach. However, this changed recently with strong westerly winds resulting in a large number of prions being found (numbers to be advised in the next edition). Auckland members also guided the Michael Taylor Memorial Bird Walk at Cornwall Park on 18th June. Public attendance was good, the weather favourable, and an interesting array of birds was seen. – IAN MCLEAN

SOUTH AUCKLAND

A local Song Thrush nest was found with 4 eggs on 17th June that fledged 4 chicks. Tony Habraken noticed a New Zealand Pigeon building a nest on 24th June and then incubating, but high winds in July put an end to this breeding attempt.

After not finding the Aka Aka Cattle Egrets last year it is good to have them back there and in better numbers. The first was reported by Bruce Parry on 13th June. There were about 30 a week later and Yvonne Guise found 80 on 7th July. Other notable local sightings were a New Zealand Falcon found by Tony Habraken on 16th June, and a Brown Skua seen at Miranda by Graeme Brind on 1st June, and again by Rick Else on 8th June. A Brown Quail was found at Miranda by Rick Else on 8th June and again on 19th June. Older members remember them in the nearby hill country in the 1960s but had thought them long gone.

The winter census weather was better than we expected so a good turnout of members enabled good counting. The best bird on the Manukau may have been the dead Light-mantled Sooty Albatross at Kidd's Beach found by David Lawrie, but a mystery egret was found by Ian Southey at Waitakaruru that was about the size and shape of a White-faced Heron, but white with a yellow bill, so it might have been an Intermediate Egret.

Oystercatchers have been noted as migrating from 5th July. At the end of August, numbers of most local migrants were well down and no newly arriving godwits have been reported.

An unexpected reward for the 55 years of census data we have gathered on the Manukau Harbour was one of the first 'Mauri o te Moana' awards from Auckland Council on 16th June, which was presented

to the South Auckland Branch of Birds New Zealand and accepted by Ray Clough and David Lawrie, who have certainly contributed their fair share of the work over the years. We also congratulate Tony Habraken who received a Meritorious Service Award from Birds New Zealand for organising these censuses, among other things, for many years.

Beach patrol highlights included a giant petrel and an Antarctic Fulmar in June. Then on 22nd July, 45 prions of 5 species were washed ashore including 27 Fairy Prions and 11 Common Diving Petrels. On 8th August, 153 prions were found ashore, mainly Fairy and Thin-billed, with a Blue Petrel among them. By 30th August they were slowing only a little with another 77, mostly Fairy Prions, but they were joined by 63 Fluttering Shearwaters and an exceptional count of 4 White-faced Storm Petrels.

Just 2 of Karen Opie and Tony Habraken's banded Banded Dotterels from Port Waikato were found over winter in the Kaipara Harbour—one by Tony and the other by Gwenda Pulham—but the first 2 banded birds had returned to the port on 17th July. Please keep an eye out for banded Banded Dotterels as we don't have many breeding birds left in South Auckland so are keen to know how they are doing.

On 15th July a group of 8 people spent 6 hours making Caspian Tern decoys in David Lawrie's basement as part of a programme attempting to restore the breeding colony that used to be present every year. They were set out on 6th August and have met with some success with some real live birds sitting with them.

Birds New Zealand in South Auckland now has a Facebook page www.facebook.com/birdsnzsa thanks to Karen Opie. This is a good way to keep up with our findings and activities, and there has already been some engagement with the wider world. Have a look! – IAN SOUTHEY

TARANAKI

Taranaki enjoyed an early autumn that ended abruptly in mid-May with some wet windy weather that brought some unusual bird reports. A Light Mantled Sooty Albatross was found at Oakura on 20th May that died soon after. Another was found alive 2 kilometres inland near Okato which was restored to health and released. On 25th May a Kerguelen Petrel was found alive in New Plymouth and another at Whangamomona, 58 km inland. A Short-tailed Shearwater was picked up alive from a beach near the city and an Antarctic Fulmar was found in July.

In mid-May a White Heron, a Reef Heron and a White-faced Heron were seen at a pond near Lake Rotomanu and the June field trip to the same area turned up 26 species, including 9 Little Shags and a Pheasant.

New Zealand Falcons are often seen around New Plymouth city and at Mount Taranaki. The Cockerams, who live on the park boundary, saw one harassing a neighbour's doves. Pied Shags are still around with 10 at Awakino, 2 at Waiongana and 1 at Port Taranaki.

And in mid-June, 12 Royal Spoonbills were at Mokau.

Emily Roberts from Project Hotspot (our newest member) is often out on the coast looking for Little Penguins and Reef Herons. There was a Black-fronted Dotterel was at Waiwhakaiho and 5 New Zealand Dotterels at Rahotu beach.

On a fine July morning 5 of us wandered the frost-rimmed tracks at Pukeiti where Tui were most numerous, Bellbirds not so plentiful, and New Zealand Pigeons common. As I write this there are 4 Cattle Egrets and White Heron with some cows in a paddock over the fence. – PETER FRYER

HAWKE'S BAY

Local activities centred around the Birds New Zealand annual conference and AGM which took place in Napier over Queen's Birthday weekend in June. We were excited to see so many people attend and everything went well, including the AGM finishing on time. There was good feedback from the workshops and the sunshine made the field trips more enjoyable. The smooth running of the conference was due to the efforts of the small number of active members in the region, ably led by Regional Representative Bernie Kelly, and by all accounts everyone enjoyed it.

The May field trip took us to A'Deane's Bush, a remnant native forest patch in south-west Hawke's Bay that is now the home of translocated Rifleman. We also carried out a 5 minute bird count at selected sites.

The winter Wader Census was carried out mid-June. Highlights included the many Black-fronted Dotterels on the upper Ahuriri Estuary, over-wintering Whimbrel and Stint at Porangahau, a Pied Shag (pretty rare for here), and lots of Banded Dotterels. – IAN SMITH & BERNIE KELLY

WANGANUI

Winter is never a time of great activity here. Lynne Douglas noted a few storm-wrecked seabirds; mostly prions and a Little Penguin. The intact specimens are being collected for later analysis for ingested plastic by Lauren Roman (University of Tasmania).

Spotted Shags visit Whanganui Estuary in winter. Only a couple have been recorded so far. Ormond Torr and Paul Gibson noted two birds flying in late July. Numbers usually increase throughout winter, peaking in September before declining sharply so that there are almost none left by the end of that month. Where they come from or go to is a mystery.

Another species that makes irregular appearances in winter is Redpoll. They are back again this year, albeit still in small numbers. The other notable winter visitor is Cattle Egret. So far this winter, Paul Gibson and I have seen 11-22 birds on various occasions.

Erratum: in the June 2016 Regional Roundup from Whanganui, I reported that Ormond Torr had seen 23 Royal Spoonbills on the Whanganui estuary in mid-April 2016. In fact, the estuary in question was the Whangaehu. – PETER FROST

WAIRARAPA

In May, Peter Frost spoke to us about the Red-billed Gull survey. The meeting was well attended and the issues thoroughly covered. We have serious predation problems at two sites, at least.

On a happier note we spent a May morning on the Donnelly's Flat loop walk. Trees were fruiting and the Tui there making the most of it; just on 70 in one small area.

Following Paul Shortis' report on what seems to have been an excellent annual conference we visited Fensham Reserve where the trees are very old so it's a good test of bird-call recognition.

Our July meeting was held in Greytown, followed by a field trip to Pukaha/Mount Bruce, the National Wildlife Centre according to the sign outside. The talk there contained a notable piece of information. DOC and Pukaha/Mt Bruce have gone their separate ways and the latter now has the same relationship to DOC as any other non-government sanctuary. The politics of conservation at a governmental level have affected finances so seriously, I gather, that the break was inevitable. – ROBIN LIST

WELLINGTON

Imogen Warren saw an Arctic Tern at Plimmerton Boat Club, north of Wellington, in May while looking for Black-fronted Terns. Her excellent photographs can be seen on the New Zealand Birds Online website. A notable feature of this bird was that it was in breeding plumage with grey underparts and a black cap extending over the nape and crown to the base of the red bill. Unfortunately this bird was only a transient visitor and had disappeared before most local birders had the opportunity to see it.

In June the Wellington region had another infrequent visitor with a Yellow-eyed Penguin coming ashore on Waikanae beach north of the Waimea Stream. Unfortunately, the penguin was in poor condition and died. Yellow-eyed Penguins are rare visitors to the North Island with reports every few years of a single bird being found. The major exception was June 1972 when 28 were found dead from Palliser Bay to the Turakina River and again in July 1972 when a further 6 were found. The 2016 Waikanae beach observation is the only eBird record of Yellow-eyed Penguin from the North Island. – GEOFF DE LISLE

MARLBOROUGH

A number of people turned out for the national wader counts at Lake Grassmere in June. There was a cold southerly blowing and the handful of Wrybill we spotted hunkered down in the plants to find shelter. There were good numbers of Red-billed Gull and Australasian Shoveler, and Marfell's Beach was a pleasant for lunch afterwards. The Glossy Ibis that nested in the Wairau last spring are still around. Will Parsons spotted them again in late June, but hasn't seen the fledglings. Hopefully they will nest again this spring. In July we had our annual pot luck dinner, generously hosted by Heather, and Biz

entertained us with a very interesting slide show of the birds the Bells saw on their recent trip to Botswana, including some colourful characters and stunning animals too. – **HEATHER DAVIES**



▣ Kerguelen Petrel in care.

NELSON

Several members were involved in a fourth translocation of Great Spotted Kiwi into the Flora valley by Friends of Flora which brings the founder population to over 40 birds. Friends of Flora are collating records of Great Spotted Kiwi from throughout Kahurangi National Park and are keen to receive reports of kiwi—or their absence—from anyone visiting the back country there (email to Robin and Sandy Toy twotoys@xtra.co.nz). In April, Friends of Cobb repeated a 2011 kiwi survey in the Cobb Valley which involved 17 people at 10 sites and identified a similar low number of kiwi.

In the last regional roundup I reported historic reports of Kerguelen Petrels in the region. Coincidentally, on 28th May live birds were picked up at Pohara Golden Bay and Rabbit Island, and a third bird was found dead some weeks later in Upper Wai-iti Valley.

An Australasian Bittern has been reported twice from Paraphara Inlet and a single Whimbrel hung out for over 2 months on the Bells Island shellbank until 12th July.

The Top of South Island 2016 winter census (4th-14th June) recorded about 23,500 shorebirds, 86% of them endemic. A Lesser Sand Plover at Farewell Spit was the only irregular visitor. Also at Farewell Spit, the number of South Island Pied Oystercatchers was the second highest count since 2000, although the high number there was not recorded in other parts in the region. High numbers of Banded Dotterels were also recorded at Farewell Spit (second highest since 2009) and Tasman Bay (highest on record since 1996). And Westhaven Inlet turned in the highest ever winter count of Red Knot for that location.

Effective rat control by Abel Tasman Birdsong Trust using 200, A24 self-resetting traps has enabled a South Island

Robin transfer from Adele Island to Pitt Head in Abel Tasman National Park. Thirty-four birds were transferred in April that will hopefully re-establish the species in the coastal fringe of Abel Tasman after a 30 year absence. See the ATBT video of the translocation at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZ5rjhww8eM>. – **ROBIN TOY**

CANTERBURY

The most interesting bird in Canterbury of late was a Hudsonian Godwit seen in Linwood Paddocks in late June by Andrew Crossland. Despite many visits, it has not been seen again. However, during these searches a Whimbrel was found in the same area. Also at the Avon-Heathcote Estuary, the number of Bar-tailed Godwits is down on previous years, but does not necessarily indicate a decline in the numbers wintering in Christchurch. Normally nearly all the godwits gather at the estuary, but this year there appear to be groups in other areas, such as Brooklands Lagoon.

Cattle Egrets are back at their usual haunts around Lake Ellesmere. A maximum count of 19 was recorded in May. A single bird was seen in Waikuku during the same month and 5 were found near Clandeboye, South Canterbury, in July. A final sighting of note was that of a Rook on Kaikoura Peninsula in early June.

May's field trip to Kaikoura for sea-birding at Point Kean was thoroughly enjoyed by the 8 members who attended. Among the species seen were Buller's and White-capped Albatross and Northern Giant Petrel, and a Little Penguin at South Bay.

The Winter Wader Count at Lake Ellesmere produced 2 Gull-billed Terns, 13 Cattle Egrets, 7 White Herons, and solitary Wrybill and Bar-tailed Godwit. Another count at the Ashburton Lakes in July turned up 19 different species including 18 Crested Grebes, 9 Grey Ducks, large numbers of New Zealand Scaup, and 2 New Zealand Pipits.

May's meeting featured brilliant photographs of New Zealand and North American birds taken by Mike Ashbee, a Canadian birder who moved here last year. As interesting as the photographs themselves were the stories he told about how he got to take them. Photography clearly takes a lot of dedication! The following month, members enjoyed a visit by Marlborough Falcon Trust's Vikki Smith and Rob Lawry with Tappe and Hera, 2 New Zealand Falcons. Interestingly, Tappe has been scaring away feral pigeons from the University of Canterbury.

A celebration of 2 inspirational birders opened our meeting in July, as Peter Reese received his Meritorious Service Award. We also celebrated the birding career of one of our oldest members, Sheila Petch. The evening ended with our youngest member, William Harland, sharing some of his bird photographs, and Brian Darlow sharing some he took in the UK.

– **ELEANOR GUNBY**

OTAGO

Otago Branch participated in 'Our Living World' at the Botanic Garden as part of the International Science Festival, where a good number of members helped out. We set up a display of nests, posters, and a banner in the Information Centre, along with *Birds New Zealand* magazines and brochures which attracted interest throughout the day. We led several birdwatching walks and saw 22 species, which enthused participants.

During the winter wader count in June most of our godwits were at Hooper's Inlet now that it is open to the sea and undergoes regular tides. The Banded Dotterels were some way off but a juvenile Royal Spoonbill came right in to feed by us. The Sinclair Wetlands survey was postponed due to windy weather, so we hope the next attempt will go ahead.

The number of Silvereyes at garden feeders is very low so far this winter, probably due to the mild autumn. I tallied 5 Silvereyes for the Garden Bird Survey, compared to 50 last year, and the dearth of Silvereyes has generated quite a bit of discussion in the local newspaper.

– **MARY THOMPSON**

SOUTHLAND

The Red-crowned Parakeets in Otatara Scenic Reserve may have bred as Lloyd Esler reports hearing 4 recently and more were heard again in the Omaui Reserve in May.

DOC carried out banding of New Zealand Dotterels at Masons Bay on Stewart Island and at Bandy Point in Awarua Bay near Bluff, where a Grey-tailed Tattler was also seen. A few members volunteered so with the assistance of some funding from the Dorothy Alloo bequest a good number were banded.

A New Zealand Falcon was reported from an Invercargill suburb and near Southland Boys High School recently, indicating there is a resident bird in Queens Park. A Light-mantled Sooty Albatross was photographed on the track by Invercargill estuary, but it was no longer there the following day.

We took a visiting Australian birder to see southern New Zealand Dotterels at Awarua Bay where we found a flock of 24 surrounding our official bird photographer, Birds New Zealand member Glenda Rees. Roosting with the dotterels was a flock of 30 Red Knot. While in the bay we spotted a Whimbrel, a species not seen here for many years, and the following day Glenda photographed a Hudsonian Godwit.

Lauren Roman (University of Tasmania) will be arriving in September with a permit to dissect seabirds to check for plastic ingestion for her PhD. Lloyd Esler has some seabirds in his freezer for her to look at and she will be calling at other locations, including Auckland Museum.

– **PHIL RHODES**



1) Arctic Tern, Plimmerton. Photo by Imogen Warren. 2) Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, Ettrick. Photo by Ernest Clarke. 3) Herald Petrel, Kermadec Islands. Photo by Steve Wood. 4) Great Frigatebird, Kermadec Islands. Photo by Tim Barnard 5) Yellow-eyed Penguin, Kaikoura. Photo by KORl. 6) White-winged Black Tern, Ashley Estuary. Photo by Mike Ashbee. 7) Grey-backed Storm Petrel, Kaikoura. Photo by Ailsa Howard. 8) Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross, Kaikoura. Photo by Dennis Buurman/Albatross Encounter.

Bird News

This feature contains news of sightings that have not received official acceptance by the Records Appraisal Committee of Birds New Zealand (1st March to 31st August 2016).

An **Australian Wood Duck** pair with three ducklings was seen near Mapua (Nelson) on 27/3 and the resident **Plumed Whistling Duck** duo at Anderson Park, Taradale (Hawke's Bay), was reported on 4/6, but only one was seen for certain on 16/8.

An **Erect Crested Penguin** found on Foxton Beach was taken into care in late February and released near Dunedin in early March, with another sighted at Nuggett Point (Otago) on 11/3. A **Yellow-eyed Penguin** found at South Bay, Kaikoura, on 25/5 was taken into care and recovered before being released. Another one was found ashore on Waikanae beach near Waimea Stream in June.

A rare sighting of **Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross** was one photographed off Kaikoura on 13/3. An even rarer sighting was a **Shy Albatross** photographed off Palliser Bay in Cook Strait on 15/5 which, if accepted, would be the first live record of this Tasmanian breeding species in New Zealand. There was a series of **Light-mantled Sooty Albatross** sightings in May with one found on Oakura beach (Taranaki) on 20/5 that died soon after, one near Okato (Taranaki) on 26/5 that also died, one by Oreti River estuary (Southland) seen only on 23/5, and another seen from the Cook Strait ferry on 27/5, but the most unusual record was a grounded bird at Ettrick near Roxburgh (Central Otago) seen only on 29/5, 90 km inland.

A **Herald Petrel** was photographed off Meyer Islets in the Kermadec Islands on 29/3. If accepted, this would be the first New Zealand record of this species. Another rarity was a **Providence Petrel** reported at L'Esperance Rock in the Kermadec Islands on the same day. Also rarely seen in New Zealand, a **Blue Petrel** was spotted flying over the sand dunes at Kawhia Beach on 28/6.

A handful of **Kerguelen Petrels** were found ashore in May with one near Waimea Stream at Waikanae Beach, one at New Plymouth on 24/5, one at Whangamomona (Taranaki), 58 km inland, one at Pelorus Sound on 26/5, and one at Golden Bay on 28/5. Two **Soft-plumaged Petrels** were seen at sea 31 nautical miles west of Kawhia Harbour on 18/4, with another seen 30 nautical miles east of Napier in Hawke's Bay on 6/6.

An **Antarctic Fulmar** found at Hokitika beach on 19/5 was taken into care in Christchurch where it succumbed. Another one found on New Brighton beach in Christchurch on 25/5 and taken into

care also succumbed. A **White-headed Petrel** found in Waikanae on 25/5 was taken into care, but it also met the same fate.

An interesting record of **Grey-backed Storm Petrel** was one that crash-landed at a supermarket in Kaikoura on 2/4 that was released alive shortly afterwards on the nearby peninsula.

Tropical seabirds continued to set pulses racing at the Kermadec Islands with 8 **Great Frigatebirds** at Raoul Island and Meyer Islands on 30/3, 2 **Red-footed Boobies** at Napier Island on 31/3 (since accepted as the first New Zealand records of this species), and 3 **Brown Boobies** at L'Esperance Rock on 28/3. Further south, a Brown Booby was at the Muriwai Gannet Colony on 21/3 and another at Gannet Island off the Waikato coast on 18/4. A second trio of Brown Boobies was seen, this time at Muriwai Gannet Colony on 13/5, followed by a single bird there on 16/5.

The Renwick (Marlborough) **Black Kite** was seen on 3/3 and 20/5.

The long-staying **Oriental Plover** was at Ohiwa until 3/4; the long-staying **Broad-billed Sandpiper** at Kidd's Beach (Manukau) until 12/4; and the long-staying **Terek Sandpiper** at Foxton Beach until 12/3.

A **Far Eastern Curlew**, a **Marsh Sandpiper** and 4 **Black-tailed Godwits** were at Miranda on 6/3, the same day that a **Black Stilt** was at Ashley River estuary (Canterbury). A **Hudsonian Godwit** and 3 **Black-tailed Godwits** were at Miranda on 7/4, with 4 **Black-tailed Godwits** seen there on 24/4. A Hudsonian Godwit was also on Linwood Paddocks at Avon-Heathcote Estuary (Canterbury) on 27/6 and another at Awarua Bay (Southland) on 27/8. The only **Lesser Sand Plover** reported was one seen on Farewell Spit in June.

A **Long-tailed Skua** was seen in Queen Charlotte Sound on 28/3. A **Brown Skua** was seen off Kaiuaa (South Auckland) on 1/6, at nearby Miranda on 8/6, and at Moeraki (Otago) on 23/7.

There were single **White-winged Black Terns** at Kaituna Lagoon, Maketu (Bay of Plenty) on 13/3; at Rakaia bridge (Canterbury) on 15/3; at Bromley oxidation ponds, Christchurch, on 5/6; and at Avon-Heathcote Estuary, Christchurch, on 27/6. Two were at Motueka bridge (Nelson) on 16/5 and two at Ashley River estuary on 21/8.

There was a flurry of **Arctic Tern** sightings at Miranda on 24/4 and 25/4, Tukituki River mouth (Hawke's Bay) on 14/5 and 29/5, Plimmerton on 21/5, and Napier on 22/5.

A possible **Restless Flycatcher** was seen at Rangiora (Canterbury) on 7/6 and a possible **Fairy Martin** at Kawhia Road (Waikato) on 7/7.

Sources: *Birds New Zealand Unusual Bird Report Database, NZ Birding Forum, regional roundups, New Zealand Birders Facebook group.*



Birds New Zealand

BIRDING EXPEDITIONS

Heritage Expeditions and Birds New Zealand are offering Birds New Zealand members the opportunity to travel to the world's best birding destinations this summer. 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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