

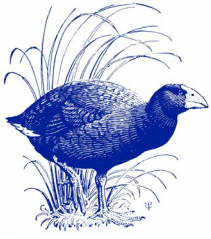


No. 19 September 2018

Birds New Zealand



The Magazine of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand



Birds New Zealand **goodness KITCHEN**



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COVER IMAGE

New Zealand Falcon or Kārearea, near Arthurs Pass, South Island. Photo by Mike Ashbee.

AUSTRALASIAN ORNITHOLOGICAL CONFERENCE

DARWIN 3-5 JULY 2019

KEY DATES FOR THE AUSTRALASIAN ORNITHOLOGICAL CONFERENCE



Abstract submissions open
21/8/2018

Abstract submissions close
4/12/2018

Abstract submissions announcement
21/1/2019

Earlybird registration opens
21/8/2018

Earlybird registration closes
19/2/2019

AOC 3-5th July 2019
www.aocdarwin.com






India's dawn chorus

Join us for a fully escorted, small-group, bird-lovers and wildlife tour in north India. 20 days, departing 14 October 2019.

India's diversity of habitat types and altitudes give it a rich bird life. It has over 1200 bird species including 70 raptors, 30 duck and geese species, and 8 stork varieties. We visit 5 magnificent National Parks: in the Himalayas, the Ganges Plains and on the Deccan Plateau. In this season we will also see masses of migratory birds from north Asia. And wildlife, including tigers, is a bonus.






Colour India

Contact: colourindia.co.nz | elight@kiwilink.co.nz
09 422 0111 | 021 235 3932



❑ Bruce McKinlay presents David Melville with the Robert Falla Memorial Award/ Photo by Darren Markin.



❑ David Lawrie presents Eleanor Gunby with her A.T. Edgar Junior Award/ Photo by Darren Markin.



❑ David Lawrie congratulates Mary Thompson for most new members in 2017/ Photo by Darren Markin.

From The President's Desk

It is with a great deal of trepidation that I set out to write my first column as President of Birds New Zealand. David Lawrie has done such a fantastic job over the last decade that it will take some time before I'm up to his standard.

2018 Conference and AGM

It was an exciting opportunity to see so many of our members at the well-organised conference over Queen's Birthday Weekend. There were more than 160 registered participants and the buzz around the meal tables and during breaks was exceptional. I'm sure that Les Feasey and his organising team are having a well-earned break after such an exceptional weekend. It's not often these days that I get to go to a meeting and hear a pair of Little Penguins braying under the floor at night!

I was proud that, through its various awards, the Society is able to recognise such a wide range of quality contributions to its work and the study of birds (*see photos above and on page 5*). Recent Council decisions to make further efforts to recognise student and first-time authors in *Notornis* were rewarded with quality candidates. It was also pleasing to have such a stimulating debate about the proposed change to a new logo. The feedback on the work so far and the future direction of the Society was well thought through and appreciated. Work on the website refresh and branding guidelines for the new logo continues. The launch of the logo will be tied to the launch of the revamped website and this will be the subject of a full article in the December issue.

2019 Conference and AGM

The 2019 Conference and AGM will be held in Wellington. Arrangements are already underway for what will be another successful weekend. This will be a significant conference for the Society as it will be the 80th AGM. Details will be posted online in due course and I urge you to get organised early for a weekend in Wellington next June.

Te Reo name for the Society

For some years, Council has been considering how we should present our Society in Te Reo. We consulted with some recognised experts in Te Reo and received a number of options to consider. After some debate, Council has agreed to adopt **Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa** as an alternate name for the Society in the Maori language. This is not part of the rebrand or logo project, but the result of a conversation that Council has had over a year or more that we should seek to present ourselves in both official languages of New Zealand. **Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa** contains elements of a flock or a collective, and the study of birds. It can be shortened to **Mātai Manu**.

National Bird Monitoring Scheme

The Society is moving towards the launch of a National Bird Monitoring Scheme and Council has engaged Wildlife Management International Ltd (WMIL) to design, plan and develop the infrastructure for it. Mike Bell and Nikki McArthur have written an update on progress in this issue (see page 11). I'm pleased to report the Society's partnership with "Goodness Kitchen" (who previously marketed under the Fruzio brand) has been renewed for 2018 and has been crucial in getting this Scheme underway.

For those members who wish to see how previous *Atlas* data has been used, I recommend you visit the website of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (PCE) and download the two reports completed by Landcare Research

which were used as resources in the PCE's report 2017 report: *Taonga of an island nation: Saving New Zealand's birds*: <https://www.pce.parliament.nz/publications/taonga-of-an-island-nation-saving-new-zealands-birds>

Notornis changes

Council has confirmed Dr Craig Symes as the editor of *Notornis* after Dr Leigh Bull had to stand down due to pressure of work. Craig and his family have relocated to New Zealand from South Africa where Craig has been an active ornithologist and university scientist for the past 25 years. Welcome Craig; and I hope you are being flooded with quality manuscripts. Leigh Bull has been a very good and supportive editor of *Notornis*, and the Society is sad to be losing her skills and commitment, but we thank her for her hard work since 2016. As a result of the hard and consistent work of Leigh and her predecessor, Jim Briskie, *Notornis* has been issued with an "Impact Factor". This is, depending on who you talk to, either a marketing tool for publishers or a useful guide for intending authors as to where they should be submitting their work. For *Notornis*, the Society seeks to have a balanced approach with a focus on our region and descriptive natural history which provides an outlet for the results of study of our birds and for sharing new knowledge about our birds. Let's not lose our commitment to that mission. However, it will not be delivered if members and scientists fail to submit manuscripts to ensure that *Notornis* continues. The Impact Factor received of 0.351 is a base on which to improve and gives a profile in the Publication Based Research Funding (BPRF) process of New Zealand universities.

Old data sets

At the AGM, Council asked Regional Representatives to start compiling lists of old datasets or notebooks of observations that they are aware of, and to start sending these to Council. If you are aware of any such datasets or notebooks, please contact your RR so they can add them to their lists. Once Council has a better appreciation of what we have to work with, we can make logical decisions as to which order to digitise these, or to analyse them for publication.

Society officers

One of the highlights at the AGM was the recognition of Mary Thompson as the Regional Representative with the largest increase in members for 2017. Also of note is the recent confirmation by Phil Battley from Palmerston North that he will take on the role of Regional Representative for Manawatu. This is an important region and it is good to have such a committed member picking up this role to support the Society's activities there.

Library resources

I've just finished reading a recent copy of *British Birds* magazine. This came to me through the Society's Library and gave a fascinating insight into the issues that birding and ornithology face in the UK, and further afield. This and many other quality ornithological resources are available to members by contacting the Society's Librarian, or looking at the publications page of the Society's website.

The seasons are turning here in Dunedin; trees are starting to flower and Tui and Bellbirds are starting to be heard around the city as they fight for nectar. It's a good time to be out and about with binoculars and notebook, taking it all in.

BRUCE MCKINLAY, President

New *Notornis* Editor

Craig Symes has been appointed as the new editor of *Notornis*. Craig has been involved in ornithology for at least the past 25 years and recently arrived in New Zealand with his family from South Africa. He is currently employed at Scion in Rotorua. For the past nine years he worked as an Associate Professor at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, lecturing and doing research mostly on birds. He has published widely on a number of ornithological topics, with some focus on parrots, bird community ecology, bird movements, bird-plant interactions, and urban bird ecology. Stable isotope analyses and bird-banding have been valuable tools in his research. He has travelled widely, pursuing birds in Africa. Some of his greatest adventures further afield have included a seven-month research project in the Papua New Guinea Eastern Highlands investigating "homegarden" effects on bird communities, sampling birds in Cambodia for avian influenza, and studying Glossy Black Cockatoos in south-eastern Queensland.

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 2018. Nominations should be on the standard forms, which are available from RRs, 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 your RR or the OSNZ Secretary.

2019 Membership Renewals

Subscriptions are due on 1st January 2019. Renewal invoices will be emailed or posted in November 2018. If you have not already done so, please notify the Membership Secretary of your email address (membership@osnz.org.nz). Please pay on time, or close to the due date because we depend on your subscription to continue our work to encourage and support the study and enjoyment of birds.

The Gift of Birds

Are you looking for a Christmas gift? You can gift someone a 2019 Birds New Zealand subscription for just over a dollar a week to help foster a lifetime of study, knowledge and enjoyment of birds. Please send an email to eo@osnz.org.nz and we will send you the gift voucher, or visit our website for more details: <http://www.osnz.org.nz/perfect-gift-voucher>

Bird Banding Master Database milestone

The Department of Conservation (DOC) has reached the first milestone in rebuilding the Bird Banding Database. DOC's Data Architect has designed a fit-for-purpose data schema incorporating all requirements and specifications. This model was used to build a new database, which is now cloud hosted in the Amazon Web Services (AWS) cloud. Phase I of the project was concluded after selected data samples were used to test database functionality. Phase II will undertake identification, inspection and correction of all historic banding data from various data sources spanning eight decades. The corrected, clean data will be transformed to fit the new database design and be loaded into the new Bird Banding Master Database in the AWS cloud. The Banding Office would like to thank all Society members who have converted their data into the new data template. It is very encouraging to see an increase in data submissions - proof of the banding community's engagement with this ambitious project. We are all looking forward to Phase III and subsequent phases, when an online interface will be developed to enable direct data upload and reporting, facilitating data analysis, sharing and publishing, as well as smarter data collection in the field.

MICHELLE BRADSHAW

Beach Patrol Scheme 2016 – preliminary report

This report is based on 303 cards for 2016 received as at 14.8.17 (231 in 2015. Other numbers are: 231 in 2014, 262 in 2013, 324 in 2012, 352 in 2011, 315 in 2010, 385 in 2009, 381 in 2008 and 403 in 2007). This shows a pleasing increase after several years of steady decline in the number of beach patrols carried out. In 2016, 1,305 kilometres were patrolled (1,065 in 2015, 1,069 in 2014, 1,388km in 2013, 1,625km in 2012, 1,846km in 2011, 3,210 in 2010, 4,470km in 2009, 2,524km in 2008 and 2,307 in 2007). Dead seabirds found in 2016: 1,892 (1,377 in 2015, 1,388 in 2014, 4,851 in 2013, 1,924 in 2012, 57,920 in 2011, 3,266 in 2010, 4,763 in 2009, 3,906 in 2008, 3,786 in 2007 and 3,117 in 2006). There were no significant wrecks during the year but there were several unusual records. The second beach patrol record of a New Zealand Storm Petrel was from Ruakaka on 7/1/16; a Peacock was found on Waihi Beach, and a Channel-billed Cuckoo from Spirits Bay on 2/8/16.

The average recovery rate for the whole country is 1.4 birds per kilometre compared with the 2015 average of 1.29. The highest average was in 2011 with 31 birds per kilometre as the result of a huge prion wreck. In 2016, Southland had the record for the greatest number of patrols with 60 and there were no patrols done in Fiordland, Wairarapa and East Coast North Island. During 2016 only one banded bird was noted on the cards. This was a Black-fronted Tern, banded on the Upper Clarence River on 19/12/15 and recovered at Kaikoura on 31/10/16 by our champion band recoverer, Bev Elliott. The value in beach patrol specimens was apparent during the visit by Lauren Roman. Thanks to all beach patrollers who collected and froze specimens for her to dissect as part of her study into plastic ingestion by seabirds. Transcription of scanned BP records onto the online database continues with most of the data entry now completed.

The continued success of the Beach Patrol Scheme is due to the dedication of those hardy souls who brave all manner of weather conditions to trudge the weary miles in search of decaying corpses. Please note any banded birds on the forms or cards, and please note any obvious cause of death. There is a large supply of blank cards for those who prefer to use cards rather than the online form.

LLOYD ESLER, BEACH PATROL SCHEME CONVENOR

Antipodes Island declared mouse-free

Conservation Minister Eugenie Sage declared the Antipodes Island group mouse-free in March, confirming that the "Million Dollar Mouse" joint initiative between the Department of Conservation (DOC) and funding partners the Morgan Foundation, WWF-NZ, Island Conservation and public supporters, had successfully delivered one of the most complex island eradication projects ever undertaken. "This is huge news for conservation both in New Zealand and internationally," the Minister said. "Special plants and wildlife, including 21 species of breeding seabird and four unique species of land bird are found on Antipodes Island."

The Minister visited the 2,100-hectare Antipodes Island group aboard *HMNZS Wellington* in February when the monitoring team were dropped-off to review whether the winter 2016 baiting operation had been successful. "The successful Antipodes Island mouse eradication is another landmark conservation achievement which underlines DOC's technical expertise in pest control and threatened species protection."

Colin Hill (1938-2018)

Colin was Canterbury Regional Recorder for some years and an avid birder at Lake Ellesmere for decades, along with Sheila Petch and Kathleen Harrison. They found many rare birds there, including the first NZ record of Little Stint. Colin farmed sheep and deer, and won the Ballance Environmental Award for his sensitive use of natural vegetation at the lake margin to provide shelter for his stock. He was a lovely guy, very laid back and laconic, hospitable and friendly to everyone, especially if you wanted to go birding on his land - as long as you didn't upset the birds or the sheep. Colin was in Parklands Hospital for the last few years with dementia and passed away on 17th July. An interview is posted here: <https://www.osnz.org.nz/sites/osnz.org.nz/files/regional-newsletters/Canterbury%201305.pdf>

JAN WALKER



❑ Melanistic Sacred Kingfisher, Whakatane, July 2018. Photo by Rochelle Vanstone/R. Vanstone Photography.

Rare melanistic Sacred Kingfisher

Rochelle Vanstone spotted something unusual while walking towards the end of Bunyan's Road, Coastlands, in Whakatane on 8 July 2018: a black kingfisher with purplish-blue back and head. It was with three other kingfishers and Rochelle managed to take a few photographs before it flew away. Luckily, she knew this was something odd and exciting, and promptly sent in an Unusual Bird Report (UBR) to the Records Appraisal Committee (RAC). She also posted her photos on the *New Zealand Birders Facebook group* (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/857726274293085/>), which were quickly passed around the birding world, after Michael Szabo posted it to the BirdingNZ Forum (<http://www.birdingnz.net/forum/>) for discussion. Although Sacred Kingfisher is reportable in the Chatham Islands or subantarctic islands, reports from mainland New Zealand are not required. Melanistic kingfishers are a very rare sight in New Zealand with only one other reported sighting in Waikato, so it is worth sending these sightings to the RAC. The RAC welcomes sightings of any bird that is unusual, out of range or that you just can't identify. You can report such sightings using the online reporting form (<https://www.osnz.org.nz/webforms/online-reporting-form>) or directly to the RAC Secretary via email (racsecretary@osnz.org.nz) or NZ Post (C/o 35 Selmes Rd, Rapaura, RD3, Blenheim 7273).

ELIZABETH (BIZ) BELL, RAC SECRETARY



❑ 3D-printed New Zealand Fairy Tern decoys. Photo by Shaun Lee.

3D-printed Fairy Tern decoys

3D-printed New Zealand Fairy Tern decoys produced by designer Shaun Lee are being supplied to Birds New Zealand members and other organisations working to help save this critically endangered endemic species. Previously, polystyrene decoys were used to attract Fairy Terns into open areas where their leg-bands could more easily be seen and recorded, but those decoys did not weather well and a need was identified to create more durable and realistic models. To make them, Shaun took measurements from a mounted specimen in the Auckland War Memorial Museum collection and hand-painted the various seasonal plumages and a juvenile bird based on the specimen, as well as drawings made by Gwenda Pulham and photos from Susan Steedman. Each decoy is then mounted on a large spike, which can be pushed into the sand to anchor it. The decoy pivots on the spike like a wind vane, so that it always faces into the wind, just as real Fairy Terns do when roosting or incubating. Given that most people have not seen a real Fairy Tern, the 3D-printed decoys could also play a role in educating the public about the plight of the species.



❑ Outgoing President David Lawrie (left) was thanked for his decades of service to the Society and presented with a Keith Woodley painting by new President Bruce McKinlay. Photo by Darren Markin.

Birds New Zealand Awards 2018

The following awards were presented at the June AGM:

Robert Falla Memorial Award - David Melville: For his contributions to OSNZ, including holding numerous positions (RR Nelson, Banding Liaison Officer, Councillor, Convenor and Member Scientific Committee), international contributions to bird study, in particular in shorebird migration and ecology, publishing widely on ornithological matters including co-authoring 'Moult in birds', and contributing to the global security of migrating birds through membership of Asia-Pacific Migratory Waterbirds Conservation Committee Global Flyway Network Technical Committee of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (see photo on page 3).

A.T. Edgar Junior Award - George Hobson: For his contributions to research (Banded Dotterels study initiated by Mainland Island Restoration Operation/MIRO), displaying a range of birding skills, sharing knowledge of birds as a Zealandia Ambassador, coordinating YoungBirdersNZ, providing a youth perspective at Council meetings, and co-designing a Memorandum of Understanding between Birds New Zealand and YoungBirdersNZ.

A.T. Edgar Junior Award - Eleanor Gunby: For her efforts in the communication and promotion of the study of birds, including editing the Society's Canterbury newsletter (*Wrybill*), contributing to YoungBirdersNZ, *New Zealand Birds Online* and *Birds New Zealand* magazine, and publishing her first short note in *Notornis* (see photo on page 3).

Region with largest increase in members in 2017: Mary Thompson/Otago (see photo on page 3).

Notornis Student Award: Lauren Little (Behaviour of stoats raiding rock wrens in Alpine New Zealand. Little, L.; King, C.M.; O'Donnell, C.F.J.).

Notornis New Author Award: Ann-Kathrin Schlesselmann (Single season colony records of black-fronted tern chicks. Schlesselman, A-K.V.; Cooper, J.; Maloney, R.F.).

Conference Student Talk Award: Rebecca French (*Human disturbance on sub-antarctic yellow-eyed penguins - what is the impact and how can we reduce it?*).

Conference Student Poster Award: Lyndsay Rankin.

Conference People's Poster Choice Award: Megan Friesen (*Quantifying the population and breeding success of Buller's Shearwater*).



■ Council and Regional Representatives (L-R): Paul Garner-Jones, Ian McLean, Keith Woodley, Peter Frost, Colin Miskelly, Sharon Alderson, Oliver Druce, Les Feasey, Denise Fastier, Ian Armitage, Bruce McKinlay, Helen Taylor, David Lawrie, Natalie Forsdick, Mel Galbraith, Bernie Kelly, Ingrid Hutzler, Bruce Postill, Mary Thompson, Paul Cuming, Sandra Wallace, Geoff De Lisle, Anne McCracken, Ian Southey, Heather Davies. Photo by Heather O'Brien.

Minutes of the 79th Annual General Meeting of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand

Held in Waitangi on 3 June 2018 5pm.

Present

More than 80 members and friends.

Apologies

Jill West; Paul Sagar; Joy Sagar; Graeme Taylor; Rosemary Heather; Willie Cook; Kevin Matthews; Sharon Alderson.

Motion That the apologies be accepted. **Mel Galbraith/Denise Fastier** Carried

Minutes of the 2017 AGM

Motion That the minutes of the last AGM, having been circulated, be accepted as a true record of that meeting. **Ian Armitage/Les Feasey** Carried

Matters Arising - Rebranding

There was discussion of the draft logo as presented by Shaun Lee. David Melville, Bruce McKinlay, John Cockrem, David Lawrie, Tony Beauchamp, Bruce Postill, Ian Southey, Murray Williams, Ian Armitage and others spoke on this matter and Helen Taylor outlined the anonymous feedback received before a motion was put.

Motion That we adopt the logo. **Bruce Postill/Bill Campbell** Carried

Motion Move that this group leaves it to the Council to make the final decision, guided by professionals. **Lana Fraser/Bruce Postill** Carried

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's Report was read by Paul Garner-Richards. The 2015 and 2016 accounts have now been audited and remain unchanged. They are available on the website (www.osnz.org.nz). Another apology that this year's accounts are in draft form due to a death in the accountant's family. These should be available in a week or two on the website. Last year's accounts are similar to the previous year, although there is slightly more for Council meeting expenses now that Council are meeting three times a year. The only other change is that we had downgraded the value of the library, but this year it's gone up again thanks to David Melville's evaluation. It's now valued at \$24,000 and our total assets are about a quarter of a million dollars, so we are still in good financial shape. Murray Williams noted the outstanding expense every year is printing. The Treasurer explained that the printing costs for the magazine have actually gone down and that the Society's printing costs include more than the magazine. At the start of 2018 the Society had liabilities outstanding of \$24,230, part of which were the printing costs of the December 2017 magazine and *Notornis*. This was due to the invoice for those issues not coming out until the end of January 2018. Murray asked for confirmation the new printer was cheaper than the previous printer. This was confirmed, and in addition to the printing costs being lower, it

includes the whole of the magazine being printed in colour.

Motion Recommended by the AGM that the Treasurer's Report and financial statements presented be accepted and that Council arrange to get the accounts audited as soon as possible. **Paul Garner-Richards/Helen Taylor** Carried

The President thanked Paul for his work and noted that in future the design and layout costs of *Notornis* will be slightly higher because, following recommendations from Murray (past editor), we have decided to outsource this part of the production process to reduce the workload of the honorary editor of *Notornis*.

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: Russell Thomas, Viv Rutherford, Sheila Petch, Kathleen Harrison, and Ian Sutherland. Sue Bell (widow of Brian, one of our fellows who sadly passed away last year) was welcomed. It was noted that the President's Report has been published on the Society's website. Council were introduced: David Lawrie outgoing President, Bruce McKinlay President elect, Ian Armitage Vice President elect, Paul Garner-Richards Treasurer elect, Ingrid Hutzler Executive Officer, Denise Fastier Secretary, Keith Woodley, Mel Galbraith, Colin Miskelly, Helen Taylor (and Sharon Alderson, who was absent). In an effort to break down barriers between the Council and members, several extra people were invited to Council meetings (Young Birder representative George Hobson and Wellington Regional Representative Geoff de Lisle). The President confirmed that he is standing down and congratulated Bruce McKinlay as the incoming President. Bruce was elected unopposed for President, congratulations also to Ian Armitage who on a similar basis was nominated Vice President and Paul Garner-Richards as Treasurer.

The President announced that the new Council member is Natalie Forsdick. The President reiterated the key role that RRs play in the Society and thanked them all for their input. There is good news on our publications, as *Notornis* has gained an impact factor due to the hard work of Dr Bull and her predecessor Dr Briskie. The Beach Patrol Database Project, under Ian Armitage's guidance, is well advanced and making very good progress of double-entry of data into a digital format. It is hoped it will be finished by the end of the year. It's one of the oldest biodiversity databases in New Zealand with 27,900 records, of which 27,100 have been double entered. The *New Zealand Birds Online* website received great support from photographers. The site gets about 2,000 hits per day, so it's a great source of outreach for the Society. Ken Allen, Administrator of T-Gear Charitable Trust, is attending the AGM this year. T-Gear donates funds every year to the Birds New Zealand Research Fund. Ken acknowledged the wonderful talent of those who had presented talks, not just of the depth of the work but the ability to articulate it in a way that a layperson understands what you have been doing. Fifteen projects were funded. Fruzio are also in the middle of a rebranding exercise and will now be known as 'Goodness Kitchen'.

Motion Propose a vote of thanks to the sponsorship we receive from T-Gear and Fruzio. **Peter Frost/David Melville** Carried

Adrian Riegen thanked all regions for their contributions to the National Wader Project. Nikki McArthur updated the meeting on

eBird which, thanks to those who regularly put their observations on, is approaching the millionth bird on the database. As for how the National Bird Monitoring Scheme is going, there is a very early draft design with a set of research questions for the scheme. The President thanked the membership and the outstanding work of the executive officer, and the rest of Council. He also thanked his wife Lynn.

Motion *Move annual report of Council be adopted.* **David Lawrie/ Bruce McKinlay** Carried

Motion *Formally acknowledge thanks to T-GEAR and Fruzio.* **Peter Frost/Helen Taylor** Carried

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

Election of Officers

Bruce McKinlay has been nominated as President, Ian Armitage has been nominated as Vice President, Paul Garner-Richards has been re-nominated as Treasurer for another three-year term on Council. These positions were all elected unopposed. A ballot was conducted for the remaining vacancy resulting in Natalie Forsdick being elected to Council. All votes were scrutinised by three appointed members and checked for validity against current membership records. The bulk of votes were cast online via 'Survey Monkey'.

Motion *That the ballot papers be destroyed.* **Denise Fastier/Mel Galbraith** Carried

Constitutional amendments proposed

(As advertised in the March 2018 *Birds New Zealand* magazine)

Notice of Motion for four amendments to the Constitution of The Ornithological Society of NZ Inc.

1. At its meeting in Wellington on 7 October 2017 Council endorsed recommendations for four amendments to the Society's Constitution. Two Regional Representatives subsequently endorsed these recommendations; in the absence of any further comments it is assumed that other Regional Representatives do not object.

2. The Constitution requires that amendments can be made at a General Meeting of the Society after "due notice of motion has been given in the notice convening such General Meeting". Refer to Clause 17.1 of the Constitution.

3. The following Notice of Motion is proposed to enable four recommendations to be debated and voted on at the Annual General Meeting to be held in the Bay of Islands in 2018. This matter needs to be included on the AGM Agenda as "Amendments to the Constitution".

4. A full background paper has been published on the Society's website. Notice of Motion in terms of Rule 17.1 of the Constitution Notice of Motion is given to members that the Constitution of The Ornithological Society of New Zealand Inc. be amended at the General Meeting of the Society in 2018, as follows:

Amendment to Rule 16.1.1:

Delete: At every Annual General Meeting the Council shall submit an annual report and the audited statement of accounts of the Society for the previous year.

New amendment: At every Annual General Meeting the Council shall submit an annual report and a statement of accounts of the Society for the previous year. The Council may elect to have the statement of annual accounts audited, or reviewed, by an independent reviewer in accordance with the requirements of relevant legislation.

Auditing is expensive, but if we got the accounts reviewed it costs less. Colin wondered if the addition of the word either; The Council may elect to either get the statement of annual accounts audited, or reviewed. Murray Williams - take out the comma and that takes account of that, e.g. The Council may elect to the statement of annual accounts audited or reviewed. Peter Frost - change may to shall elect.

Moved and seconded previously. Carried with above amendments.

Amendment to Rule 14.16:

Delete: All monies or other property held by the regions are to be held on behalf of the Society according to such conditions and procedures as the Council shall determine and the annual financial accounts for a region are to be audited by the Treasurer of the Society.

New amendment: All monies or other property held by the regions are to be held on behalf of the Society according to such conditions and procedures as the Council shall determine. The annual financial accounts for a region shall be incorporated within the annual accounts of the Society as a whole and may be reviewed by an independent reviewer in accordance with the provisions of Rule 16.1.1.

Peter Frost - replace the word may with shall. Moved and seconded previously. Carried with above amendments

New Rule 14.17: Where a position of regional Treasurer for any specific region cannot be appointed Council may appoint a Treasurer from another region as Acting Treasurer in the region not having an appointed Treasurer for a period not exceeding one year. If a regional Treasurer position continues to remain vacant for more than one year, Council shall assume all financial responsibilities for that region, including the keeping of accounts, the management of bank accounts and the control of cheque books. Regional management of accounts may be delegated by Council to the region once a new regional Treasurer is appointed. This was driven by a region not having anyone prepared to accept role of treasurer which is untenable. Peter Frost - do you mean to imply flexibility in the first sentence or should that be shall. Bruce McKinlay - we do mean to imply flexibility as the preference is that regions will manage the finances. Query: Is there any situation where you wouldn't delegate funds back if there - change the last may to a shall.

Moved and seconded previously. Carried with above amendments

Amendment to Rule 3.7:

Delete: To maintain a library of ornithological literature for the use of Members and to promote a wider knowledge of birds.

New amendment: To maintain a library of ornithological literature and other media for the use of Members and to promote a wider knowledge of birds.

Moved and seconded previously. Carried

Notice of Motion: Review of Conservation Policy

John Cockrem, Karen Baird, David Melville, Kerry-Jayne Wilson, Peter Frost, Mike Bell, Detlef Davies, Carol Davies, Graham Loh, Sue Maturin, David Lawrie, Murray Williams and others spoke to this Motion. John Cockrem - we are having some good discussion. The key word in the proposal is the word CAN engage - policy can be one sentence that allows for advocacy.

Motion *That this meeting asks the Council to update the Society's conservation policy so that it includes advocacy for conservation of New Zealand birds as one of the activities that the Society can engage in.* **John Cockrem/Kerry-Jayne Wilson** Carried

By **general agreement** the AGM was adjourned for dinner and it was **agreed** that it would be resumed on the following evening.

Society Awards

The President presented the annual Society awards (see page 5).

General Business

Motion *That the Society thank David Lawrie for his years of service.* **Peter Frost/David Melville** Carried

David was then presented with a gift of one of Keith Woodley's paintings.

David thanked members: "Some jobs you do because you do them and some because you enjoy them, and this falls into that latter category."

Meeting closed 7.31pm.

This is an abbreviated version of the AGM Minutes. The full minutes are posted on the website: www.osnz.org.nz



▣ (L-R) Keith Woodley, Ian Armitage (Vice President), Denise Festier (Secretary), Paul Garner-Jones (Treasurer), Sharon Alderson, Colin Miskelly, Helen Taylor, Bruce McKinlay (President), Natalie Forsdick, Mel Galbraith and Ingrid Hutzler (Executive Officer).

Birds New Zealand Council

The Birds New Zealand Council comprises ten people (President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and six other Councillors) who are elected by members at the AGM plus members' votes cast via email. Each Councillor holds office from the conclusion of the AGM at which their election is announced until the conclusion of the third AGM following their election. The Council conducts the business of the Society and reports to members in the AGM, and via the Society's magazine, website, social media and email. The Society's Constitution contains full details: <https://www.osnz.org.nz/sites/osnz.org.nz/files/Constitution.pdf>

President Bruce McKinlay: Bruce has been involved in the Society in a greater or lesser role for a number of decades. His first participation in a Society Scheme was to contribute cards to a Brown Creeper survey in the 1980s. Since then he has contributed to both *Atlas* Schemes. He also convened and led an Otago region distributional study of the birds in Dunedin City, published in 1995. He has been a regular contributor to regional wader counts in Otago. Bruce also led the third and fourth Otago Harbour Surveys between 2009-2012. He curated the data for all the previous surveys and compiled this into a single data source. Since *eBird* was launched in New Zealand he has scoured old note books and added what he can find there to the database and has contributed to add checklists wherever he can. So far, this has included 18 countries, with aspirations for more. He has published sporadically in *Notornis*, most recently a short note on the passerine birds of the grey shrublands of the Wakatipu. He has been on Council since 2008, serving as Vice President of the Society since 2009. In this time, he has led the development of a modernised website and updating of the tools to support conference organisers and Regional Representatives. He has also led the conceptual development of a new National Bird Monitoring Scheme. At home, Bruce is supported by Dinah and daughters Tess and Erana. For his day job, Bruce is a Technical Advisor for the Department of Conservation based in Dunedin.

Vice President Ian Armitage: Ian has enjoyed an interest in birds since his childhood and, being a Wellingtonian, three of the locations he best remembers watching and learning about

birds in the 1950s were when tramping in the Tararua and Remutaka Ranges, and at the Pencarrow Lakes near the entrance of Wellington Harbour. A keen interest in birds and forests led him into a career in forestry with the former NZ Forest Service, mostly in the North Island. During the 1980s he was appointed to advisory positions for forestry development and conservation in Samoa and elsewhere in the South Pacific and South East Asia. Since 1991, he has been an independent consultant in forestry development in Asia, especially China. Ian joined the OSNZ in 2001 and was the Wellington Regional Representative for six years. He became a life member of the Society in 2004. He contributed to the organisation of the 2006 and 2011 Society conferences hosted by the Wellington Region and led the organisation of the Wellington Harbour Bird Survey (2008-2010). Ian joined Council in 2012. He has been an enthusiastic contributor to and supporter of *eBird* since it was introduced. Ian has taken the lead with the design and construction of a new digital database for all Beach Patrol records that aims to systematically document the identity, location and numbers of all birds found dead on New Zealand beaches. Ian is also a member of the National Oiled Wildlife Response Group for Maritime New Zealand and was actively involved in wildlife management and recovery operations during the *MV Rena* accident near Tauranga during 2011-2012.

Treasurer Paul Garner-Richards: Paul has always enjoyed watching birds, especially albatross and other seabirds when he worked on container ships. He has been involved in the Society since 2005 after he moved to New Zealand. Marrying into the Bell family, Paul joined in a range of bird research projects in Wellington and then in Marlborough when he and Biz moved there in 2006. His first major contribution to the Society was to input observer data for the *Atlas of bird distribution in New Zealand 1999-2004*. In-between his work on the InterIslander (still counting seabirds from the bridge), Paul often joins the Marlborough members on surveys for the National Wader Count, regular counts at Grassmere Saltworks, monitoring the results of the Fluttering Shearwater transfer project on Maud Island, and other birding trips as part of the monthly activities held in the region. In 2009, he joined Council and became Treasurer of the Society. Travelling often back to the UK to see

family and on expeditions with Biz, Paul regularly adds his bird observations from a number of countries to *eBird* (and is currently ranked the 4th *eBirder* by species in Anguilla).

Secretary Denise Fastier: Denise is a Senior Ranger, Biodiversity for the Department of Conservation in Hawke's Bay. She has over 20 years of experience working in this field, including two years as Technical Support Officer for Karori Wildlife Sanctuary (Zealandia), two years as Island Ranger on the Chatham Islands, and as a contractor for over 10 years. Through this work, she has participated in dozens of translocations covering a variety of species, as well as bird monitoring and pest control work.

Immediate Past President David Lawrie: David has been a member since 1964 when he was found looking at birds in a paddock by Ross McKenzie and signed up on the spot! He is the Immediate Past President and has been on Council for about 20 years. He is also a former Regional Representative for South Auckland, serving in the role for 15 years. In real life he is a Land Surveyor in private practice in Pukekohe. He was elected to the Miranda Naturalists' Trust Council in 1975 and has been on the committee ever since. David was the inaugural Chairman of the NZ Fish and Game Council and has also served terms as Chair of the NZ Gamebird Habitat Trust. He was one of the founders and the first Chair of the National Wetland Trust, and he is still involved in the Trust as Treasurer. He also served for five years on the Waikato Conservation Board, including two years as Chair. He still finds time to get out and enjoy watching birds.

Dr Colin Miskelly: Colin joined the Society as a schoolboy in 1976, and has continued as an active member of the Auckland, Canterbury and now Wellington branches (as well as a brief stint on the West Coast). While at Canterbury University, his thesis work on Snares Island and Chatham Island snipes led to a continuing research interest in this previously little-known group of birds. Colin joined the Department of Conservation in Hokitika soon after completing his PhD, and held a variety of scientific, management and advisory roles there before moving to Te Papa (as curator of land vertebrates) in 2010. One of his major activities at Te Papa was and is as project manager and editor for the website *New Zealand Birds Online*, which was launched in 2013. Colin has been a prolific contributor to *Notornis* over the years, with more than 60 papers published, and several more in the pipeline. A member of Council since 2010, Colin was a member of the Rare Birds Committee from 2000, and has convened the re-constituted Records Appraisal Committee since 2010. His activities within the Wellington Branch include organising 21 years of bird counts in the Zealandia/Karori Sanctuary, and ongoing monitoring of translocated petrels on Mana Island.

Sharon Alderson: Sharon has a Master's degree in Biology and has worked at the Department of Conservation for over ten years as an Issues Manager in the Operations Team. She has been an enthusiastic amateur birder since staying on Tiritiri Matangi Island. That led to volunteering on the island, leading guided walks, becoming a *Supporters of Tiritiri Matangi* committee member, and editor of the supporters' Dawn Chorus newsletter for several issues. Attending the Miranda Field Course led her to cannon-netting and wader-counting. In 2015, she ran the first Birds New Zealand Youth Camp for quite some time. Since then she has supported four more Youth Camps (Waikato, Miranda, Northland, Southland) and is keen to ensure that they continue. She believes that there are great untapped opportunities to develop interest in birds through the arts, as well as science.

Dr Helen Taylor: Helen is a conservation genetics researcher at the University of Otago and has been working in bird research for the past nine years. Originally from the UK, working with birds has taken her all over the world, from helping out with breeding bird surveys in Malta to scaling tall trees in the Amazon to check macaw nests in Peru. She came to New Zealand to study for a PhD on inbreeding depression in Little Spotted Kiwi at Victoria University of Wellington. Since 2015, she has been working at the University of Otago, studying the

effect of inbreeding on male fertility in a variety of native and introduced bird species. This has included analysing bird sperm swimming speeds in the field with her custom-designed mobile sperm lab, running genetic samples in the lab at the university, and analysing the data collected. In her spare time, she likes to get out into the New Zealand countryside, hike up mountains, and spot whatever birds she can. She was previously a public relations professional, and maintains an active interest in science communication, advocacy, and outreach. In 2018, she organised *The Great Hihi Sperm Race* which raised over \$11,000 for Hihi conservation.

Mel Galbraith: Mel has been a member of the OSNZ since 1970. He is a Past President of the Society and a former Regional Representative for the Auckland Region. He is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Natural Sciences, Unitec Institute of Technology (Auckland), teaching ecology, biodiversity, biosecurity and restoration ecology within the Biodiversity Management major of an applied science degree. Mel has been an active participant in the ecological restoration of Tiritiri Matangi Island since the project's initiation in 1984, and he also contributes to a number of other ecological projects, particularly the Miranda Naturalists' Trust and Motu Kaikoura Trust (Hauraki Gulf). Mel is also active in the New Zealand Ecological Society.

Keith Woodley: Keith joined the OSNZ in 1990 and credits membership of the Society with opening significant birding and conservation doors to him. He has been resident Manager at the Pukorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre since 1993 and is the author of *Godwits: Long-haul champions* (Raupo/Penguin) 2009 and *Shorebirds of New Zealand: Sharing the margins* (Penguin) 2012. He has participated in regular wader surveys in north-east China and North Korea since 2009 and is a published bird artist.

Natalie Forsdick: Natalie is a PhD student at the University of Otago where she works on a project using genomic tools for conservation of threatened species, specifically the Kaki (Black Stilt). She has a passion for nature and conservation, and her enthusiasm for birding has developed with her research interests. Her Masters project at the University of Canterbury investigated the population genetics of the Chatham Island Black Robin and NZ Tomtit. She visited the Chatham Islands after receiving a scholarship to travel with Heritage Expeditions on a Sub-Antarctic birding expedition. An active member of the Society, she attends Otago meetings and public outreach activities. At the 2017 Conference in Te Anau she was awarded the Student Presentation Award for her talk about her Masters research, and was presented with the Society's unofficial Takahe mascot, "Orbell". She has since worked with "Orbell" to raise the Society's profile and helped expand its social media presence. She has presented her research at national and international conferences. She is also excited to join the Council and aims to continue to grow the Society in the same open, inclusive, and friendly fashion that she has experienced as a member.

Terms of Council Members

Position	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
1	Miskelly	Miskelly	Miskelly	Due		
2	Woodley	Woodley	Woodley	Woodley	Due	
3	Taylor	Taylor	Taylor	Due		
4	Alderson	Alderson	Alderson	Due		
5	Galbraith	Galbraith	Galbraith	Galbraith	Due	
6	Armitage	Armitage	Forsdick	Forsdick	Forsdick	Due
7 President	Lawrie	Lawrie	McKinlay	McKinlay	McKinlay	Due
8 VP	McKinlay	McKinlay	Armitage	Armitage	Armitage	Due
9 Treasurer	Garner-Richards	Garner-Richards	Garner-Richards	Garner-Richards	Garner-Richards	Due
10 Secretary	Small	Fastier	Fastier	Fastier	Due	



■ Joan Watson (nee Telfer), Rex Watson and Neil McCrostie with two *Notornis* by Lake Orbell, Takahe Valley, 20th November 1948. Photo by Geoffrey Orbell.

70th anniversary of the rediscovery of *Notornis*

This year is the seventieth anniversary of the rediscovery of the *Notornis* or South Island Takahe. On 20th November 1948, it was rediscovered in a remote valley in the Murchison Mountains. Joan Watson (nee Telfer) published the following eyewitness account in *The Mirror* women's magazine in June 1949: "On November 19 [1948] a party including Dr [Geoffrey] Orbell, Neil McCrostie, Rex Watson and myself left Invercargill. At 3.30am the next day we were on board the *Takatumu*, moving up the lake [Te Anau]. We dropped anchor and landed our packs on the western shores about 5.30am. On this occasion we were travelling very lightly, carrying lunch, cameras and 50 yards of fishing net. The trek was long and tedious, up terraced slopes. Through dense beech forests, twined with lawyer and obstructed by windfalls and undergrowth tangled with a mass of roots, ferns and rotting trees, our progress was slow and checked on numerous occasions.

After three and a half hours' climbing we finally emerged on to a clearing covered with snow-grass and boxwood, and further on to snow-grass only. When crossing this flat we noticed that the snow-grass had been pulled out at intervals in the same manner as swamp hens pull reeds. These places also showed many droppings suggestive of a large bird. A few minutes later Dr Orbell dropped suddenly flat on the ground and motioned that we should follow suit. The three of us thought immediately of a deer. But it was not a deer. To quote the doctor: "Either a pukeko or it!" Peering excitedly through the long snow-grass we saw a strange looking bird strutting about on a small patch of swampy ground. The bright crayfish [red] beak and dark head were unmistakable.

Dr Orbell crawled slowly and carefully through the long grass, applied a telephoto lens to his movie camera and commenced shooting. At this stage he signalled that another bird had appeared on the scene. We took the net out of the pack and proceeded to drag it into a semi-circular position. When this task was completed we were ready for the attack, and the doctor indicated to Rex to stand at the opening of the net and help drive the birds in.

During all this time the birds were making a very penetrating gulping noise. Apparently not in the least scared, they walked into the net of their own accord, and when we attempted to release them from it they clawed with their powerful feet, snapped with their strong beaks and screamed violently. This commotion roused a third bird which we were unable to catch. He hovered at the edge of the bush ... for about an hour. All this seemed too good to be true. Only 9.30am and two *Notornis* had been captured. When we had completed our observations and the birds were released we returned [home] in what *Time* magazine so aptly described as 'a state of ornithological ecstasy'."

Year	Banded	Re-sighted	%
2011	111	74	67%
2012	443	130	29%
2013	305	131	43%
2014	296	206	70%
2015	112	18	16%
2016	60	33	55%
Total	1327	592	45%

Table 1: Black-billed gulls banded on the Wairau River

Black-billed Gulls of the Wairau River

The endemic Black-billed Gull is the most threatened gull species in the world. Following population declines of up to 80% over the last 30 years, the species was listed as 'Nationally Critical' in the most recent NZ Threat Classification. Wildlife Management International Ltd (WMIL) and Birds New Zealand Marlborough have been leading a ground-breaking study to investigate the movements and survival of Black-billed Gulls breeding in Marlborough. The central focus is a banding project that began in 2009 and this project reached a significant milestone recently, with the 8,000th band re-sighting being reported!

Marlborough's longest braided river, the Wairau, is an important breeding habitat for Black-billed Gulls and other shorebirds. Over the past seven years, we have banded a total of 2,111 Black-billed Gull chicks at breeding colonies on the Wairau River. This includes 784 chicks that were banded at just one colony in the 2017 breeding season. Chicks are banded at approximately three-weeks-old, before they are able to fly. They are first herded into a pen before metal and coloured darvic leg bands are applied to each gull chick. Each coloured band has a unique individual alpha-numeric code which can be read from a distance, giving the ability to identify each bird individually.

The bands are easy to read and we now have a huge database of re-sightings. This has enabled us to investigate population parameters such as juvenile survival, recruitment and movement. Excluding last season's chicks, a total of 1,327 chicks were banded during 2011-2016. Of these, 45% have been re-sighted at least once. However, chick survival fluctuates annually, ranging from 16-70% (Table 1), suggesting environmental factors significantly influence survival post-fledging.

Through our efforts, we have been able to gain a greater understanding of the dispersal behaviour and wintering quarters of these gulls. A total of 3,010 band sightings has been recorded outside of the Wairau colonies (2011-2017). Most of the Wairau's gulls are seen wintering in Marlborough (Lake Grassmere, Wairau Lagoons, Wairau Bar and Diversion, Picton and Havelock). Many are also seen wintering at Kaikoura and in the lower North Island. Part of this result will be an artefact of effort. The data also shows individual birds' dispersal behaviour, with many birds returning to the same wintering grounds each year. For example, T27, a chick banded on the Wairau River in 2014, goes up to the Manawatu-Whanganui region each winter, then returns to the Wairau River each breeding season.

In addition, re-sightings at breeding colonies have shown that a number of birds do not return to breed on the same river that they fledged from. Wairau River chicks have been recorded breeding on the Takaka, Motueka, Buller, Maruia, Awatere, Clarence, Waiau, and Hurunui Rivers. Some birds have also shifted rivers once they started breeding. Gull T55 was breeding on the Upper Wairau in November 2016, but when the colony was washed out, it shifted to the Motueka Sandspit to breed.

As our database increases, so does our knowledge, and we are very grateful to all those who have sent in sightings of banded Black-billed Gulls. Over the next few years, continuing to get re-sightings is vital to learning more about this species, so please keep an eye out for banded Black-billed Gulls. Please contact mike@wmil.co.nz or paula@wmil.co.nz if you see a banded one.

PAULA HARBORNE, WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT INTERNATIONAL Ltd



Orange-fronted Parakeet photo by Michael Szabo.



Rock Wren photo by Oscar Thomas/NZ Birds Online.



Blue Duck photo by Mike Ashbee.

National Bird Monitoring Scheme on track for June 2019 launch

We are pleased to report that rapid progress is being made towards designing and planning Birds New Zealand's new flagship *National Bird Monitoring Scheme*, due to be launched at the Society's 80th anniversary Conference and AGM in Wellington on 1st June 2019. A dedicated team of Birds New Zealand members and staff from Wildlife Management International Ltd (WMIL) have been working hard to turn the scheme from an idea into reality. Some key developments have occurred in recent weeks, as follows.

Sampling design and field methodology:

The Birds New Zealand team have been working with science staff from the Department of Conservation, Landcare Research and local government agencies to finalise the scientific design for the scheme, with the aim of producing a dataset that will help improve the conservation of birds and their habitats in New Zealand. The scheme is likely to consist of two components. The first will be a bird distribution atlas, and will involve observers surveying the presence and absence of bird species in each individual 10 x 10 km grid square across the country over the next five years. Rather than returning a single datasheet from each square however, observers will be required to submit several complete bird checklists: one for each major, accessible habitat type within each square. The strength of this approach is that these can be merged to produce single-species bird occupancy estimates for each grid square, allowing comparisons with the previous two *Atlas* datasets, so that we can describe the changes in bird distribution over the 45+ years that Birds New Zealand's three atlas datasets will now span. These checklists will also provide us with the ability to examine habitat-related patterns in bird distribution in much more detail than is possible with either of our two earlier *Atlas* datasets.

The second will likely be a nationwide network of bird count stations, with at least one modified 5-minute bird count carried out at each station over the next five years. The data from these counts will create the ability for us to report representative and unbiased estimates of bird abundance on national and regional scales, something which has never before

been attempted in New Zealand. We still have some significant statistical and logistical issues to work through before this component becomes a reality, so it's likely that June 2019 will see the launch of the bird atlas component of the scheme, with the abundance component to follow, once the necessary work has been done.

By October, WMIL staff will have written a detailed outline of the proposed sampling and field methodology for the atlas component of our scheme, and will have circulated it to Regional Representatives (RR) and Regional Recorders for their comments, and to share with local members. We are very keen to receive any feedback on any element of the proposed design, via your RR or Nikki@wml.co.nz

Branding, marketing and fundraising:

Birds New Zealand has been working closely with our sponsors, Goodness Kitchen (previously marketed under the Fruzio brand), staff from Novo Strategic Advertising and Design, and representatives from Te Rūnanga a Rangitūne o Wairau to develop a distinctive logo and brand name for the scheme, and to develop a plan for promoting the scheme to the birding community and to potential sponsors. In our next update in the next issue of this magazine, we hope to be able to share with you our scheme's shiny new logo and brand name!

We are also exploring various options to raise the funds required to run the scheme over the next five years. We hope to raise the funds required for the scheme "up front", removing any need to impose charges on the end-users of this dataset, in order to recover costs. This will remove a major barrier that has limited the use of the previous *Atlas* datasets to inform conservation decision-making in recent years. Birds New Zealand has already submitted a major funding application for the scheme, and will be preparing more over coming months. We will also be working with our sponsor, Goodness Kitchen, to explore other potential sponsorship opportunities for the scheme.

Designing the infrastructure: Birds New Zealand has also been developing two major pieces of infrastructure for the scheme. The first is a custom-built *eBird* webpage which will enable observers to

enter their atlas checklist data directly into *eBird*, either using the *eBird* mobile App, or the *eBird* website. WMIL staff have been liaising with members of the *eBird* team at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to modify the New Zealand *eBird* database to enable it to receive, validate and securely store the scheme's atlas data. Although we will have clear preference for our observers to enter their own data into *eBird*, for those who don't have access to *eBird*, we will also be developing several options to record and submit data 'the old-fashioned way' via pre-printed field datasheets. Whenever possible however, we will be encouraging observers to enter their data via *eBird*, as this delivers several big advantages to the scheme: firstly, it will greatly reduce the data entry workload of the scheme's coordinating team, and secondly, any data entered into *eBird* will go through *eBird*'s data verification process, helping us to identify and correct any errors or ambiguities. The second is a project website and associated social media pages.

Whereas *eBird* will act as the primary data entry tool and will provide a 'real-time' view of how well we are progressing towards achieving complete coverage, the project website and social media pages will be the places to go to learn more about the background to the scheme, its aims, sponsors and project partners, and to download resources such as the scheme's field manual, datasheets, landowner letters, calling cards etc. They will also be the places to find out all the latest news and announcements about the scheme.

Working with partner organisations:

One major goal we have is to recruit volunteer observers from within Birds New Zealand and the wider birding community. To achieve this, we are making contact with partner organisations, including Forest and Bird and QEII National Trust, to discuss opportunities for their members to get involved with the scheme. Over the next few months, we hope to make contact with as many of these partner organisations as possible, in the hope that we will have as many volunteer observers as possible ready to hit the ground running on 1st June 2019.

For questions, comments or more information, please contact: Nikki McArthur (Nikki@wml.co.nz)

MIKE BELL AND NIKKI McARTHUR



▣ Bar-tailed Godwits, Elephant Island Bay, Sindo, North Korea.

Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust – Nature Conservation Union of Korea Joint Shorebird Survey, North Korea, April 2018

Article and photos by Adrian Riegen

Continuing northwest from our 2017 survey area, the main aim of the 2018 survey was to visit the island of Sindo, which is on the west side of the main Amrok River and separated from China by the narrower western branch of the Amrok River. Yalu Jiang on the Chinese side of the border with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has been surveyed regularly since 2000 by Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust and Yalu Jiang National Nature Reserve teams. There is a feeling that shorebirds move freely back and forth across the China-DPRK border on a regular basis and we hoped to determine whether or not this was the case.

This year was chosen for the cross-border survey because of the suitable tides that would be large enough to push all birds off the mud. A total of 22,810 shorebirds of 19 species was counted at Sindo and the reed beds (Table 1). This year we also had a TVNZ crew with us, who were making a documentary on the work that we have been doing in the DPRK, which was aired on the "Sunday" programme in New Zealand in late May.

We arrived on Sindo by boat from Sinuiju, the border city with China, on 17 April and settled into the hotel in the village of Sindo at the southern end of the island. The island is a little over 20km long and 5km at its widest, southern end. Most of the island is flat and covered in reed beds which are harvested for paper-making and the remaining stubble burnt off. These large open areas looked very suitable for wader roost sites, particularly for curlews, but none were seen roosting in them.

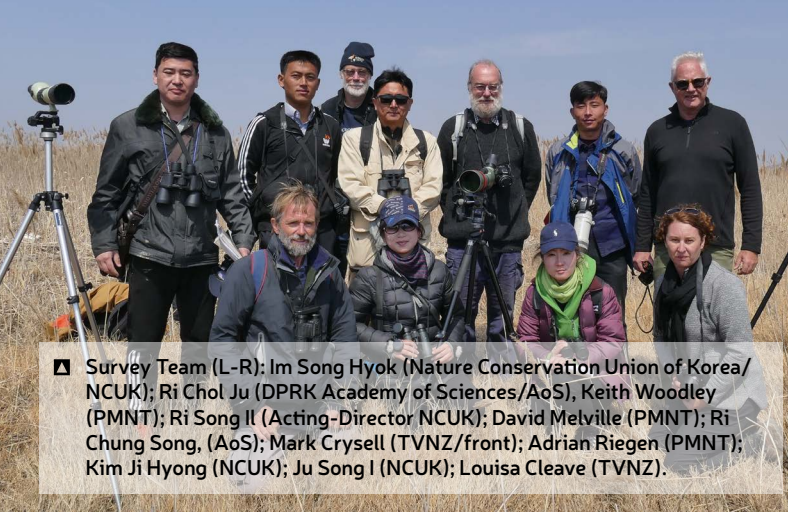
The first day of surveying (18 April) was at a series of bays on the southeast side of the island, which were reached on foot. The tide filled the southern bays first, pushing birds to the north into the largest bay and it was here that we undertook the count. The bay had no name, so we refer to it as East Bay. Curlews of both the Eurasian and Far Eastern species were by far the most dominant shorebirds, followed by small numbers of godwits and Dunlin. No flagged or banded birds were clearly identified. The mudflats were densely populated by crabs, the main source of

food for curlews. The total count of shorebirds and waterbirds at East Bay was 3,914 (total shorebirds 1,973).

The key species we saw here were Far Eastern Curlew (700), Eurasian Curlew (690), Dunlin (330), Grey Plover (139) and Bar-tailed Godwit (53). The two curlew species are not always easy to separate in the field, but we estimated an approximate 50-50 split on this occasion. Other waterbirds included more than 1,000 Herring-type gulls, 200 Black-headed Gull, 103 Common Shelduck, 102 Spot-billed Duck, 25 Eurasian Shoveler and 20 Little Grebe, which were on a reed-fringed lagoon.

In the southwest of the island there is a vast mudflat with very little sign of human activity. By comparison, the mudflats at Yalu Jiang are intensively farmed for fish and shellfish. A small island here known as Elephant Island was chosen for this site's survey name. On the landward side of the mudflats are extensive reed beds, most of which are inundated by spring tides but during our visits (19-20 April) higher areas of dry mudflat amid the reeds were still exposed at high tide and many of the shorebirds moved into these areas to roost. They could be approached surprisingly closely, enabling flags and colour bands to be seen.

On 19 April, banded Bar-tailed Godwits and Great Knots were present from both the North Island and South Island of New Zealand, Victoria, Moreton Bay (SE Queensland), Broome and 80 Mile Beach (NW Australia), the Gulf of Thailand, and Chongming Dao near Shanghai in China. A Far-eastern Curlew with a yellow engraved flag from northwest Australia was seen, but could not be read with certainty. On 20 April, an additional Bar-tailed Godwit banded in Bohai Bay near Tangshan, China was also seen. We started the survey three hours before high tide and constantly watched for shorebirds crossing from Yalu Jiang, but we did not detect any major movement in spite of having good visibility. The total count of shorebirds and waterbirds at Elephant Island Bay was 20,848 (total shorebirds 20,226). This number may well be an underestimate, as it was difficult to



▲ Survey Team (L-R): Im Song Hyok (Nature Conservation Union of Korea/NCUK); Ri Chol Ju (DPRK Academy of Sciences/AoS), Keith Woodley (PMNT); Ri Song Il (Acting-Director NCUK); David Melville (PMNT); Ri Chung Song, (AoS); Mark Crysell (TVNZ/front); Adrian Riegen (PMNT); Kim Ji Hyong (NCUK); Ju Song I (NCUK); Louisa Cleave (TVNZ).



▲ Elephant Island Bay, Sindo, North Korea.

keep track of all the shorebirds due to their constant movement during the count. Also, several thousand were sub-roosting around 1.5km eastwards, which could not be counted properly. Key species were: 13,000 Bar-tailed Godwit 5,000 Curlews of both species but proportions of each species were difficult to determine. 1,500 Dunlin, 500 Great Knot, 200 Grey Plover and just five Whimbrel, which is another crab eating species but usually arrives slightly later on these coasts, so are likely to be more abundant in early May. Other waterbirds were surprisingly scarce with only three Common Shelduck and no Spot-billed Ducks. There were at least 400 Black-headed Gull, 200 Herring-type gulls that were not identified beyond that level. Seven Saunders's Gulls and four Little Terns completed the assemblage.

On 20 April, we first visited a site on the central east coast of Sindo where the river forms a channel between a low reed covered island where Swan Geese are found in the winter and on migration, and the main island. There were very few birds in this location and it didn't look like particularly suitable habitat for shorebirds. We stayed a short while and then arranged to go back to Elephant Island Bay where the tide was already well in. We did not do another count, but we did look at the site from a hilltop that afforded views from almost directly above the birds. Photos were taken to attempt a computer-based count later. The tide was coming in so quickly that the birds were constantly walking, making it too difficult to count accurately. Again, curlews and godwits dominated the scene, but over 400 Grey Plover were seen, which was double the first day's count.

We were able to see some banded and flagged birds but expected to see more, although the light did us no favours. Once again, some birds roosted behind the reeds and these could be approached close enough to read engraved flags and colour-band combinations. The total count of shorebirds and waterbirds at Sindo East River was seven Whimbrel, two Great Knot and one Kentish Plover. Additional counts (Elephant Island Bay) to those of 19 April were of 452 Grey Plover, 6, Little-ringed Plover, 1 Red-necked Stint, 1 Curlew Sandpiper and one pair of Common Redshank seen copulating, so it is assumed they will nest in the area.

On the morning of 21 April, we travelled south from Sinuiju to Ryongchon County to a region across the Amrok River from Sindo where we reached a vast reed covered mudflat. These reed beds covered an area of some 14 square kilometres extending out from the coast about 3.5km. It was difficult to see the extent at ground level and the vast scale was only apparent when we climbed a nearby hill later in the day. We attempted to walk to the coast through the reeds but after several boggy patches we were stopped at a tidal creek we could not cross. A local fishing boat was asked to help us and we set off on board to the mouth of the river. Along the way various mud banks were being used as roost sites by shorebirds, in particular Far-eastern Curlew and Whimbrel with small groups of Dunlin, but no Eurasian Curlews were seen. While we were not able to penetrate further into the reed beds it seems unlikely there were many more places the birds could be other than along the other tidal creek that flows through the reeds several kilometres further east.

This was fascinating habitat that is almost completely gone from the rest of the Yellow Sea (known as West Sea in Korea)

coast and is well worth preserving. The reed beds are no doubt great breeding grounds for a range of birds in the summer. The total count of shorebirds and waterbirds was 390 (total shorebirds 347). The key species were: 195 Far-eastern Curlew, 80 Dunlin and 60 Whimbrel. Interestingly, no Eurasian Curlew were seen even though other sites had a pretty even split of both curlew species.

As an area we had hoped to visit was now off limits, we had few options for surveying on 22 April. We could have returned to the reed beds, but with a falling tide series, taking a boat would have been at risk of grounding in the shallow river and so it was decided to cancel any field work for the day. It was disappointing not be able to visit the areas near the 2017 survey sites as they looked potentially very good. However, Sindo was the key place that we most wanted to visit and the island proved, as we suspected, to be a most important site in DPRK and on the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.

We were very privileged to be the first foreigners to ever stay overnight on Sindo and could not have surveyed the shorebirds on the island without doing so. Not only were there a significant number of birds on Sindo but the habitat there, and in the reed beds of Ryongchon, was a pleasing revelation and a reminder of what has been lost from almost the entire Yellow Sea. It is hoped that by highlighting these sites locally and internationally they may continue to be protected well into the future. Sindo is internationally important for at least three shorebird species: Far-eastern Curlew, Eurasian Curlew and Bar-tailed Godwit. With so much shorebird habitat lost elsewhere in Asia along the Flyway, the DPRK coasts could yet be the safety valve for shorebirds. We certainly hope so.

We are most grateful to Living Water for helping to fund this important work.

Table 1
Total shorebirds counted during the 2018 survey

Far Eastern Oystercatcher	7
Bar-tailed Godwit	13,053
Whimbrel	75
Eurasian Curlew	2,690
Far-eastern Curlew	3,895
Common Redshank	7
Common Greenshank	8
Wood Sandpiper	1
Green Sandpiper	1
Ruddy Turnstone	2
Great Knot	510
Red-necked Stint	3
Dunlin	1,910
Curlew Sandpiper	1
Common Sandpiper	2
Little-ringed Plover	6
Grey Plover	593
Kentish Plover	45
Snipe sp.	2
TOTAL	22,810



▲ L-R: Adi-Grace Mooar, Dayna Davies and Michael Burton-Smith.

Young Birders' Northland Big Day

On 5th May, Dayna Davies, a young birder from Tutukaka, Adi-Grace Mooar from Raglan, and I set out to break the Northland 'Big Day' record held by David Howes, Russell Cannings and David Thomas, which stood at 74 species. This was also the day of the annual Global Big Day. We all 'leapt' into action at 5:30am. On the way out of the house I heard a loud "SKARRRRK" and we saw five Kaka wheeling overhead! At Tarawhata, we saw good numbers of Fluttering Shearwater and Buller's Shearwater offshore. A Dunnock called nearby, and we began to tick-off most of the common songbirds.

We reached Ngunguru Sandspit just after 8am where we saw two Reef Heron and four New Zealand Dotterel, then we headed to Lake Waro where we dipped on NZ Scaup but added NZ Dabchick and Coot, among others. At Peach Cove Track we saw Royal Spoonbill, South Island Pied Oystercatcher and Pied Stilt from the car as we rounded the north Whangarei Harbour, but the bush at Bream Head, was shockingly quiet. We heard Bellbird, NZ Tomtit were common, and we had a brief encounter with three Whitehead, but no sign of North Island Robin.

At Papich Road we quickly located 164 Paradise Shelduck, 6 Grey Duck, 18 Grey Teal and 5 Caspian Terns, and Wilson Dam produced Black Swan, but recent duck-shooting activity appeared to have scared off the resident Canada Goose. At Ormiston Road, we were rewarded with gorgeous views of Australasian Little Grebe. A half-hour stop at Waipu gave us Brown Quail, Banded Dotterel and Bar-Tailed Godwit, as well as good numbers of Variable Oystercatcher. En route to Ngunguru we added Barbary Dove and the Settling Ponds held 40 Brown Teal and 16 California Quail, both handy for our Big Day list.

We reached Old Mill Lane wetland in Ngunguru at 5:30pm where we added Fernbird, Spotless Crake and Banded Rail. Time was not on our side, though, as we were now sitting on 68 species and the sun was fast setting. As darkness fell, we visited Tarawhata, where we added Morepork and Grey-Faced Petrel. A little hungry, we headed off for a meal break.

We were now on 70 species. Determined, we struck out for Matapouri in the hope of seeing Little Penguins coming ashore, but dipped. Desperate, we tried Sandy Bay for Barn Owl and dipped again. We raced back to Old Mill Lane where there were two Northern Brown Kiwi rustling at the end of the boardwalk. On 71 species, the record was still just beyond reach. We dipped on Marsh Crake and Australasian Bittern, so we walked out just four species short of the record. Despite this, we really enjoyed our Big Day and we know that when we try again in Summer, this route has the potential to get us across the line - so, watch this space!

You can read the full trip report here: <https://www.youngbirdersnz.com/blog/northlandbigday>

MICHAEL BURTON-SMITH

Pacific Islands Bird Conservation and Research Fund

The Pacific Islands Bird Conservation and Research Fund was created in 2008 to support conservation management and research on bird species classed as Endangered by BirdLife International and breeding on islands in the South Pacific, but excluding New Zealand. The Fund is administered by the JS Watson Trust through the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand (Forest and Bird) and is a result of a working partnership between Birds New Zealand and Forest and Bird. Interest is invited from scientists and others in New Zealand and the South Pacific, to support specific studies or training activities. Applications will be considered according to the following criteria:

1. Conservation management activities and research investigations, on bird species classed as "Endangered" by BirdLife International, and breeding on islands in the South Pacific, excluding the New Zealand mainland and islands within the NZ Exclusive Economic Zone;
2. Funding may be applied to bird and habitat management activities or research which enhances the sustainability of endangered bird populations on South Pacific islands, or will support the training of indigenous island residents at practical courses within New Zealand or in the Pacific islands, in applicable management techniques by suitably qualified organisations or persons; and
3. No funds will be allocated to support the attendance of persons at conferences or meetings, other than those where there is a transfer of information and/or practical techniques for application in the field of bird management.

Recipients of a grant are required to provide a summary report on their research or training work. Copies of reports or scientific papers resulting from a grant shall in the first instance be offered to Birds New Zealand for publication; reports may also be published by Forest and Bird. As a general guide, the amount of a grant shall not exceed \$5,000. One or more grants may be awarded at any one time at the discretion of the JS Watson Trust. The deadline for the next round of applications is 31 March 2019. Applications should be sent to the Executive Officer of Birds New Zealand (eo@osnz.org.nz) and must include a project title, project objective/s, a concisely written description of activities (max. 100 words), a project timeframe and a simple budget.

IAN ARMITAGE, VICE PRESIDENT

Possible sightings of South Island Kōkako

The South Island Kōkako Charitable Trust has received over 100 reports of possible sightings or calls of South Island Kōkako since it announced in January 2017 a reward of \$10,000 for information resulting in confirmation the species is still alive. Based on these reports, the Trust says the areas of most interest are to the south of Reefton (Merrijijs and Granville Forest), for where they have received seven "very encouraging reports" in the past 12 months; Stewart Island, for where they have received reports of a sighting on the North West Circuit and a call on Rakiura Track; and the northern end of Heaphy Track, for where they have received three reports of calls heard close to Aorere Shelter. The Trust has also received reports from Milford Track (up the track from Sandfly Point), Cobb Valley (Chaffee Hut), Richmond Ranges (near mid Wairoa Hut), Doubtful River (Lewis Pass area) and Hanmer Forest Park (Spur Track). However, photographic evidence remains elusive and only one Unusual Bird Report has been submitted to the Rarities Appraisal Committee for the species since January 2017 (UBR 2017/03), which was not accepted. See the Trust's website for more details:

www.southislandkokako.org

King Shag population declines by a quarter

Where the status of the King Shag was assessed to be stable in 2006, many fundamental data regarding population biology have been lacking to expand the 'stable' population assessment beyond a simple number. To study the species is complex and there have been concerns that King Shags are sensitive to disturbance. This has resulted in very little research to date; to the extent that future conservation management is potentially hindered by a lack of knowledge of its basic biology.

The NZ King Salmon (NZKS) company was granted resource consents to expand their salmon farming operation in the Marlborough Sounds in 2013. A condition of those consents was the preparation of a King Shag Management Plan to ensure that there is no reduction in the population of King Shags in the Marlborough Sounds. Two of the three consented farms are in Waiata Reach; a known feeding area for the biggest King Shag colony, Duffers Reef.

After an aerial survey in 2015, the King Shag population was assessed to be 834 birds. A second aerial census has recorded a decline in the number of birds down to 634, about 200 fewer compared to 2015. Most of the 12 breeding colonies spread throughout the Marlborough Sounds, had declined by an average of 24%, according to the census report written by ornithologist Rob Schuckard.

Uncertainty whether the decline is caused by a one-off event or by multiple key demographic parameters is partially caused by a historic underinvestment in the management of this species. If the surveys show an annual decrease of 3% or more, NZKS must investigate if their salmon farms are contributing to the decrease, and if so, put measures in place to prevent it.

In his report, Rob Schuckard wrote that research would help shed light on whether a decrease in the bird's prey fish (witch flounder, opal fish, lemon sole) could be to blame as a consequence of trawling, dredging, sediment runoff or warmer water temperatures. Extreme weather events occurred in 2018 and it has been recorded that nests with eggs and chicks have been severely affected by rough sea conditions in Cook Strait. "Identification of threats therefore needs to be a thorough process, subject to peer review wherever possible, involving critical analysis of the best available data," he wrote. "This approach is timely and likely essential for the future of the species." He also called for the IUCN to reclassify the King Shag from Vulnerable to Endangered, to reflect that it faced a very high risk of extinction in the wild.

The Department of Conservation is now developing a research project with Ministry of Primary Industries, Marlborough District Council, NZKS and the Marine Farming Association to look at population dynamics, breeding biology and foraging ecology.



▲ Rifleman (female) photo by Glenda Rees.

Energetics of torpor in Rifleman

A new study published in the *Journal of Comparative Physiology B* (July 2018) by Brian K. McNab of University of Florida and Kerry A. Weston of the Department of Conservation has found that the Rifleman readily enters torpor at ambient temperatures that are commonly encountered in their wet, cool-to-cold environment, demonstrated by large reductions in body temperature and metabolic rate in response to decreasing ambient temperatures.

The study states that when the closely-related Rock Wren faces severe winter conditions, it may respond with an extended period of torpor: "The occurrence of torpor in the Rock Wren is less well marked than in the Rifleman, but an exposure to ambient temperatures $<10^{\circ}\text{C}$ may be required to get a clear picture of its response to the stringent conditions encountered in its alpine environment. To tolerate these conditions, the Rock Wren may use an extended period of torpor required by its sedentary habits. It is the only passerine, other than the Rifleman, that may combine the use of torpor and a permanent residency in a temperate environment."

The authors also point out: "A problem potentially faced by the endangered Rock Wren is its commitment to an alpine environment that may contract and even disappear with climate warming. No evidence indicates an ability of the Rock Wren to tolerate moderate climatic conditions, given its year-long persistence at high altitudes." The study concludes that, "The evolution of torpor and a flightless condition in *Acanthisittids* [New Zealand Wrens] may have facilitated their survival on a geographically isolated, temperate landmass, and these character states permitted by the absence of endemic mammalian predators."

Clinal variation in bird body size linked to summer maximum temperatures

A new study published in *The Auk* (135[2]: 206-217, January 2018) by Samuel Andrew, Monica Awasthy, Amanda Griffith and Simon Griffith of Macquarie University and Shinichi Nakagawa of the University of Otago concludes that clinal variation in bird body size is better explained by summer maximum temperatures during development than by cold winter temperatures.

The authors state that: "Across many taxa, clinal variation in body size has been observed to follow Bergmann's rule, which predicts larger body size in colder climates. For more than a century, this pattern has typically been ascribed to selection for large body size in cold winter climates. Here, in spatially distributed observational data from 30 populations of House Sparrow introduced to Australia and New Zealand, we show that this relationship appears to be explained by a negative relationship with high temperatures during the breeding season.

Our results suggest that higher temperatures during the breeding season could reduce body size through developmental plasticity, which should be considered in combination with or as an alternative to selection."

"Our findings would predict that a hotter climate during breeding could drive significant changes in morphology among populations (and potentially within populations as well, if climate varies temporally across a breeding season). This idea, and our support for it, could account for much of the variation in body size that drives the well-observed patterns first described by Bergmann, and that are still largely attributed to selection on adult body size during cold winters. Understanding the mechanisms behind any climate-dependent developmental plasticity could prove useful for understanding how endotherms may be affected by climate change in the future."



■ Les Feasey was presented with a gift by Lois Wagener (L) and Isabella Godbert (R) from them, Tansy Bliss, Anne McCracken, Wendy Ambury, Anthea Goodwin and Kevin Matthews for all the fun they had together while organising the 2018 Conference. Photo by Darren Markin.

FAR NORTH

More than 160 people attended the June 2018 Conference and AGM in Waitangi, possibly the most ever. More papers were submitted than there were slots for speakers, and most field trips/workshops were at or over capacity. The presentations were outstanding and thanks mightily to Colin Miskelly for organising the sessions with skill and alacrity. The Copthorne stepped up to the plate with a great conference venue and were unfailingly helpful. The Far North team (with great help from Northland) toiled with a careful attention to detail that helped ensure everything went smoothly. I'd especially like to thank Lois and Isabella, and Tansy Bliss, Anne McCracken and Wendy Ambury who were all gems. They worked so hard and brought to bear to their various tasks a level of genius.

The one-day field trip to Karikari Peninsula visited a variety of habitats, with highlights including NZ Dabchicks, Wrybills and NZ Dotterels, and the one-day field trip to Urupukapuka Island was a chance to see the results of 'Project Island Song' first-hand, with highlights including North Island Saddleback, Fernbird and North Island Robin. Participants in the two-day 90 Mile Beach/Cape Reinga field trip were rewarded with the spectacle of 650-700 roosting Royal Spoonbills and 4 Cattle Egrets at Unahi Road, NZ Dabchicks on Lake Ngatu, Sooty Shearwater and other dark shearwaters off Cape Reinga, and an Eastern Barn Owl that Kevin Matthews spotlighted near Church Road. The two-day Orongo Bay Holiday Park mist-netting and banding camp was highly successful, with a total of 89 birds of 12 species caught and banded, including Eastern Rosella, Welcome Swallow, Fernbird, and Sacred Kingfisher. Thanks to everyone who organised the field trips.

The influx for the conference meant there were more birders in the Far North afterwards, with some finding rarities. Post-conference finds included a Nankeen

Kestrel near Cape Reinga; a Marsh Crake near Rawene; a Laughing Kookaburra at Unahi Road along with 2 Great Egret and a flock of 65 Cattle Egret; 3 Little Egret at Kaimaumau; a live Thin-billed Prion on a beach patrol; and several Australasian Bittern.

The Royal Spoonbill colonies here continue to expand. Along with about 800 at Unahi Road, another 500 have been seen at various locations, including Parengarenga and Houhora. The population of Eastern Barn Owl is also expanding, with 5 active nests now reported around Kaitaia and individual sightings reported further south. Beach patrols turned up numbers of prions, including Fairy, Antarctic, Thin-billed and Salvin's, as well as a White-headed Petrel, a Light-Mantled Sooty Albatross, and a Wandering Albatross. More members are also interested in participating. Wader counts were conducted at the major sites, Parengarenga, Rangaunu and Houhora. Ngati Kuri have approached Far North OSNZ for help in their area, and they have enquired about membership. They had a long and detailed list of questions about the Parengarenga populations, and we are continuing the dialogue.

NORTHLAND

Young Birder Dayna reported via Facebook seeing an Australasian Bittern at Pacific Bay wetlands on 28/7, which was then seen by other members over the following days. A wader count at Ngunguru Sandspit and lower estuary undertaken by 7 of our members with the Ngunguru Sandspit Protection Society on 7/7 recorded 316 birds. This is many more than previous years, with an increase in all the major species. VOCs are usually the most abundant species there, with 77 recorded, mostly off Tongatu Road at the small spit. The other counts were: NZ Dotterel (37); Banded Dotterel (2); Southern Black-Backed Gull (7); Red-billed Gull (55);

Caspian Tern (2); Spur-winged Plover (28); Pied Shag (12); Little Shag (2); Mallard (2); Paradise Shelduck (2); Common Myna (5); Silveryeye (3); Welcome Swallow (11); Sacred Kingfisher (6); Greenfinch (2); and Goldfinch (1). Of particular note was a count of 22 Royal Spoonbill recorded off Tongatu Road along with 32 Pied Stilt, 1 Caspian Tern and 48 VOC (included in the total above), making a total of 103 shorebirds on that small spit. There was a neap tide in the afternoon when we did the counting and some of the spit was still exposed, which proved to be a very quiet place for the birds, with less pressure from humans and dogs.

Scott Brooks reports: "an epic day out (7/7) on the first winter pelagic trip from Tutukaka out via the Poor Knights Islands to explore the area beyond. Wind and swell picked up in the afternoon, providing excellent viewing of a great variety of seabirds." Highlights included 1 Blue Petrel, 1 Soft-plumaged Petrel, 5 Broad-billed Prion, 15 Antarctic Prion, 4 Buller's Mollymawk, 5 Campbell Mollymawk, 2 Northern Royal Albatross, 5 NZ Wandering Albatross, 1 Southern Giant Petrel, 1 Northern Giant Petrel, 2 Cape Petrel, 36 Grey-faced Petrel, 2 Cook's Petrel, 50 Little Shearwater, 1,000 Common Diving-Petrel and 1 New Zealand Storm-Petrel. Scott organised a second winter pelagic trip to the same area on 21/7 which recorded a Light-mantled Sooty Albatross and a Brown Skua, among many others.

The North Kaipara Census (16/6) yielded many more birds than recent winters. Of note were 700 Pied Stilt, a species scarcely seen in the region the year before. The other totals were: 1,448 SIPO, 42 VOC, 131 Bar-tailed Godwit, 36 Red-billed Gull, 105 White-fronted Tern, 49 Little Black Shag, 145 White-faced Heron, and 44 Royal Spoonbill. The winter 5MBCs were completed by Bream Head Conservation Trust Volunteers. Of note on the Te Whara/Peach Cove lines were Kaka and Bellbird heard and seen during the April and July counts, along with good numbers of NZ Tomtit on 21/7. All these sightings are on eBird.

ANNE MCCrackEN

AUCKLAND

Early winter beach patrols of Muriwai Beach found only small numbers of birds, with just 5 found on 7/7, including a White-headed Petrel. This changed in late July with a 'mini prion wreck' taking place on the west coast. Our patrol on 4/8 found a total of 113 birds including Light-mantled Sooty Albatross (1), Storm Petrel spp (possibly a Wilson's), Common Diving Petrel (1), Kerguelan Petrel (1), Blue Petrel (1), Broad-billed Prion (1), Australasian Gannet (1), Australian Magpie (1), Common Starling (1), Salvin's Prion (3), Antarctic Prion (3), Fairy Prion (42), Slender-billed Prion (48) and 8 prion spp. Patrols of Karekare, Bethells and O'Neils beaches found similar numbers of prions.

An Australasian Bittern in a wet paddock just north of Waimauku was seen by beach patrollers over the last three months while on their way to the beach.

The South Kaipara Wader Census (16/6) recorded: 736 Bar-tailed Godwit, 127 Northern NZ Dotterel, 624 Banded Dotterel,

LES FEASEY



248 Wrybill, 25 Fairy Tern, 3 Little Tern and 19 Cattle Egret. The Mangawhai Harbour Census on 23/6 recorded: 198 Northern NZ Dotterel, 174 Banded Dotterel and 10 Wrybill. We ran guided walks in the May/July period. A walk at Cornwall Park on 20/5 was well attended by the public, although the usual Kereru and Helmeted Guineafowl were not seen. Interesting species included a leucistic Blackbird, many Paradise Shelducks, and Grey Warblers feeding among flowering Kohekohe. A walk at Ambury Park in Mangere on 1/7 yielded what looked to be a Black Stilt without leg bands. It was entirely black with some white on the vent, and so may have been a juvenile bird moulting into adult plumage.

Interesting local sightings included records of Spotless Crane at Harbourview Reserve in Te Atatu; a Brown Booby at Omaha Cove seen by Edin Whitehead on 1/7; and both Fernbird and North Island Saddleback outside the Shakespear Park predator-proof fence on the Whangaparaoa Peninsula. The sighting of a pair of NZ Dabchicks with 2 chicks by Jim Kirker at the Maungarei Springs wetland in the new Stonefields subdivision on 2/8 continues the trend of this species expanding its range to ponds on the Auckland isthmus.

IAN McLEAN

WAIKATO

Russell Cannings gave a talk at our May meeting on "Birding Smarter", which outlined the many options available for finding shorebirds, nocturnal birds and rare migrants, such as studying weather reports, radar imagery and tide charts. Used in combination, these techniques could help you see more species. Bruce Postill also gave an update on the work he is involved with in China and North Korea.

In June, Gerry and Helen Kessels gave a talk about the birds of Zambia and the wider ecology of the Zambian National Parks. Poaching of other wildlife, for example, can directly affect the stability of the local bird life, the plight of the hornbill there being a prime example. A light-hearted quiz to identify Zambian birds completed the evening.

'Returning Kokako to Mt Pirongia' was the subject of the July meeting. The talk given by Claire St. Pierre of the Pirongia Te Aroara o Kahu Restoration Society outlined how the last three Kokako were removed in 1996 and the transfer of 44 birds from Tiritiri Matangi Island and an area of the Pureora Forrest which, because of intensive predator control, had 'surplus' birds. More of Mt Pirongia is coming under predator control now and, with rat numbers down to below 3% or nil, the outlook for Kokako surviving on the mountain is looking good. Two nests were found last season, but - perhaps due to harrier predation - no chicks were reared. The Restoration Society has also been involved in the re-introduction of Pitoitui/North Island Robin to the mountain, re-planting work, and a study of native bats and *Dactylanthus*. On average it costs about \$6,000 to catch, transfer and keep safe each bird. Two members of our Waikato branch are actively involved in this work.

Bird sightings have been rather scarce this winter, but a possible American Whimbrel was spotted on the Kawhia survey in June. Unfortunately, no flight photos were taken, so it was entered as Hudsonian. Also found on the survey were 1,800 SIPO and 174 Bar-tailed Godwit. Other birds seen in the Waikato over the period include a flock of 25 Sulphur Crested Cockatoos, a Galah, and a Yellow-crowned Parakeet in Hamilton Gardens; Redpolls, Spotless Crane and a Rook in the Morrinsville area; Buller's and White-capped Albatross and a juvenile Northern Giant Petrel at Ruapuke Rocks; 3 Cattle Egrets at Lake Ngāroto; and 1,400 Australasian Shoveler at Lake Waikare.

KEN WEDGEWOOD

TARANAKI

Taranaki intends to be the first predator-free region in the country, with the Government recently donating \$11 million towards the 2050 project. *Taranaki Taku Turanga - Our Place* is led by the regional council with the aim of suppressing or eradicating rats, stoats and possums. This funding is being matched at a ratio of more than 3:1 by local government, with a total budget of \$47 million over 5 years. It will build on major pest control work already being done in Egmont National Park in an area of 34,000-ha. A project of this size has never been attempted before and the lessons learnt will be shared with the rest of the country; strong community support will be a vital ingredient in its success.

Umbrella group "Wild for Taranaki" has been formed, consisting of 40 groups, including Taranaki Iwi, South Taranaki Underwater Club, QEII National Trust, Rotokare, Birds New Zealand, DOC and others in an effort to bring all the groups together in a collaborative approach to share knowledge and inform others about the various projects they are undertaking. The four key goals are: engage the community to take action; restore the sound and movement of Taranaki wildlife; restore the cloak of Taranaki by providing corridors of native vegetation so that wildlife can move from the mountain to the sea (there are 50 native plant species and 66 animal species in Taranaki identified as threatened or at risk); and restore the freshwater of Taranaki (there is over 20,000 km of waterways with 530 named rivers and streams). Strategic initiatives have been developed to go with each goal. The regional council is offering predator traps with entrances and a pair of rubber gloves to home owners at \$10 in an effort to get urban trapping underway.

There have been more Kaka reports, with one filmed in trees at Mokau. Barry Hartley saw one, possibly the same bird, a few kilometres south of Mokau, and one has been returning to roost every evening since January in an urban garden. For a while there were 2 White Herons in Taranaki, one at Mokau and one in the Waiongana area. Eighteen Royal Spoonbill have been seen on the Mokau River and Pied Shag have been seen closer to New Plymouth at Barrett Lagoon, as well as the 5 usually around Mokau, and one seen at Tongaporutu and Urenui rivers. Our Taranaki branch made a

\$250 donation to Rotokare Reserve to buy sugar for the Hihī feeding stations.

PETER FRYER

WHANGANUI

A warmer, if sometimes wet, winter is slowly transitioning to spring. I imagine that breeding will start early this year, with several species—Tui, Bellbird and Dunnock—already singing and showing signs of territorial behaviour. Overhead flights by Mallard are now common, presumably searching for somewhere suitable to nest.

Ormond Torr produced the find of the season, photographing up to 3 Black-fronted Dotterel in a small wetland at the end of the airport, adjacent to Whanganui River. They have been there for at least 6 weeks. Although Black-fronted Dotterel are common on Koitiata Lagoon, at the mouth of the Turakina River, and have occasionally been seen at the mouth of the Whangaehu River and on the Kaitoke Stream, east of Whanganui, this is only the second occurrence here that Ormond can recollect. Does it portend a gradual spread of this species westwards at the river mouths along this coast?

Around the same time, Lynne Douglas reported a large flock of more than 63 Banded Dotterel on the estuary. Large numbers of Banded Dotterel aggregate on the airport and adjacent estuary during winter, when up to 90 are present. Bevin Shaw, while working at the airport some years ago, would count those dotterels that he could see from airport buildings up to 4 times a day, between flights. Obviously, there was considerable variation among these figures because the birds were spread out and not always all visible, and they would periodically move off to the estuary to feed on the mud flats at low tide.

Nevertheless, plotting the maximum number seen each month over three years (2011-14) shows a clear seasonal trend, with numbers increasing from February through to April-May, then declining from June-July onwards as birds dispersed to breed. Where they came from or returned to is not known. We suspect that they are mix of coastal breeders and birds from the Rangipo Desert.

In April, a further 10 Hihī (5 female, 5 male), were released at Bushy Park to bolster the population there and counter inbreeding, given that most of the 40 birds then at Bushy Park originated from just 3 females that survived to breed after the March 2013 reintroduction. The birds in this second translocation also came from Tiritiri Matangi, as part of a larger group caught for release into Lake Rotokare Sanctuary near Eltham. So far, they seem to be doing well.

PETER FROST

WELLINGTON

As we emerge from winter, a number of field projects are starting up in anticipation of a new breeding season. Wellington members will be involved in monitoring the breeding performance of Banded Dotterels in the East Harbour/Pencarrow, Fernbirds at Pauatahanui and Little Penguins on Matiu/Somes Island. A new Wellington Harbour Survey commences in August and will run

for 2 years. Each month birds on Wellington Harbour from Pencarrow to Owhiro Bay will be counted by a team of volunteers. This is a continuation of surveys which date back to 1975 and are repeated every 10 years. During winter we have had a couple of notable talks at our monthly meetings.

In July, Alan Tennyson, a curator of vertebrates at Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa gave a talk on the bird fossils of New Zealand. His talk included the discoveries at Lake St Bathans where a treasure trove of fossil birds has been found. An extraordinary discovery from Hampden Beach, Otago was the discovery of the giant fossil penguin *Kumimanu biceae*. Seeing the actual fossils of this bird showed that this was a remarkable discovery of a bird which was 1.65m tall and weighed 100 kg. The following month, Colin Miskelly, also from Te Papa, spoke about his recent trip to the Auckland Islands, an area rich in wildlife and history. A major focus of this trip for Colin was to sample Subantarctic Snipe from Disappointment Island. These samples are being used in genetic studies to determine the relationships between the populations of snipes on the Auckland Islands, and snipes from other areas of New Zealand. Colin's interest in snipes extends back to 1982 when he began his PhD studies on the snipe on the Snares Island.

GEOFF DE LISLE

MARLBOROUGH

We haven't had anything particularly exceptional this winter, just a good solid variety and number of birds being seen. It's been a wet winter by Marlborough standards, with more surface water around than usual. Maybe the birds are enjoying this.

As a group we visited the Onamalutu Domain, with stunning Matai trees, to see the bush birds in May. In June we conducted both a winter coastal survey from the Ure River mouth to Marfell's beach, and the National wader survey at Lake Grassmere, Havelock and Anakiwa. We saw many finches and pipits along the coast, as well as oystercatchers, terns, gulls, Banded Dotterels and several species of shag. It is great doing these surveys as everyone is able to be involved. The variety of coastal habitat not only provides niches for many different birds, it also provides the opportunity for people with varying walking abilities to all be involved.

In July we spent the second week of the school holidays on Maud Island encouraging Young Birders. We carried out maintenance at the shearwater colony, located the penguin boxes, saw a load of geckos, skinks and weta, and the Morepork! Night time brings a whole new set of birds. We also viewed the Australasian Gannet and King Shag colonies. Our branch had a mid-winter pot luck lunch and AGM in Renwick, starting the organisation for the 2019 Young Birders camp, and seeing the usual array of garden birds. Thanks Kristin for your hospitality. The pair of NZ Dabchick that had two chicks last Spring have remained in the area, being regularly seen at Taylor Dam and the Wairau wetlands, and Hoary-headed Grebes and Australasian Crested Grebes are regularly seen at Lake Elterwater. Fernbirds and Australasian Bitten are sometimes heard and occasionally seen at the Wairau wetlands. The Black Kite is again being sighted in

Waihopai Valley; it must be getting to a good age by now. And it is nearly time for the river birds to return for breeding. Hopefully they will have a good season.

HEATHER DAVIES

CANTERBURY

To add to the influx of Northern Shovelers, city council rangers found two drakes during the annual winter wader count at Lake Ellesmere in June. One, seen in the Christchurch City Council Reserve, has not been found since the count. The second, which was seen east of the Halswell River Mouth, was spotted a number of times that month, but no sightings of it have been reported since 27th June. Two Hoary-headed Grebes were also found in that location during the count.

Another interesting sighting was a Grey-backed Storm Petrel seen off Kaikoura in late June. Some of our members visited there in July for an extended 4-hour pelagic trip which recorded about 200 Cape Petrel and a raft of about 5,000 Fairy Prions, apparently the most that skipper Gary has ever seen! On their return, some members stopped at Saint Anne's Lagoon where an Australasian Little Grebe has been reported over the past few months, as well as 2 Cape Barren Geese.

In the last roundup I mentioned that Otago Shags had been seen at the Ashburton River Mouth over the recent months. These shags continue to be found there in varying numbers. In addition, Andrew Crossland reported 2 in late July at the Timaru Port North Rock Mole. So, it seems that these birds are moving north into Canterbury, which is excellent. An Australasian Bittern has recently been observed a few times in the Taranaki Paddocks in Waikuku, which can be seen from Kaiapoi Pa Road. There is a small ditch near the road that this bird favours, and if you're lucky enough to see it there it provides an excellent view. Two bitterns have also been reported at Travis Wetlands, and 1 at the Waipara River Mouth.

Finally, 1 or 2 Cattle Egret are being regularly seen at Tulls Road, Waikuku. There have also been a couple of reports of Cattle Egret around Lake Ellesmere. The highest of those counts was 10 at Drain Road and 11 at The Lake Road, lower than the number reported last year.

ELEANOR GUNBY

OTAGO

We have been lucky with the weather on our birding trips this winter. We completed 3 years of seasonal surveys of the Sinclair Wetlands in July. The day started out a little problematic with passing showers and rainbows en route, but upon arrival the rain cleared, the sun came out and midday temperatures reached 17°C, amazing for mid-winter! Song Thrushes were singing from all corners of the wetlands but the Blackbirds were still quiet. NZ Scaup dominated the lagoons as usual. Fernbirds were keeping their secrets and only 4 were heard on the 1km transect, although that team thought they heard a Marsh Crane call. Twelve 5-minute-bird-counts were done on Ram Island. All the data has been entered on eBird as another permanent record of all our observations and a report to the Sinclair Wetlands Trust will be compiled for use as a baseline for comparison with future surveys.

We have recommenced our project

searching for nesting South Island Robins in the forests outside the fence at the Orokonui Ecosanctuary in Dunedin. During our first survey in August we saw or heard 3-6 males and 2-3 females. Two South Island Robin pairs were observed, but no signs of nesting were seen. The Winter Wader Count was completed in favourable weather but no rarities were seen. Since then, 3 Red Knot have been reported at Blueskin Bay.

More than 20 people from the Otago region attended the Society's 2018 Conference and AGM at Waitangi, and 10 members gave presentations. The birds of the Waitangi Estuary were a treat for us to see - numerous White-faced Herons, Sacred Kingfishers, Reef Heron, Northern NZ Dotterel, a variety of pied morph Variable Oystercatchers, and a large covey of California Quail outside the hotel rooms. On the field trip, there was the excitement of seeing about 700 Royal Spoonbill roosting together in a flooded paddock at Unahi. It is one of the main overwintering sites of 'our' Otago spoonbills (some that were banded on Green Island have been seen here), so it was great to see where they go to in winter. Other 'rare' birds for Otago birders were NZ Dabchicks, Weka, Banded Rail, and on a night time expedition one of the Eastern Barn Owls that are now breeding near Kaitaia was seen with a mouse in its bill. Photos of a juvenile Australasian Crested Grebe in Otago Harbour and huge flocks of Starlings were featured in the Otago Daily Times with comments from the Society's Otago representative.

MARY THOMPSON

SOUTHLAND

Winter has been quiet on the bird front, although the weather stayed settled if a little cool for the winter wader count. Nothing of real interest showed up, although the winter flock of Southern New Zealand Dotterel at Awarua Bay numbered 64, which is a good number considering the population decline. Glenda Rees reported a number of birds with new band combinations, so it looks like DOC has been catching and banding more birds.

There were good numbers of Banded Dotterel on the Invercargill Estuary shellbanks, with at least 120 counted. Neil Robertson reported 170 Silvereyes and 38 Tui during his Garden Bird Survey; so much for the Silvereye decline reported last year. Glenda Rees photographed a 'white' Australasian Harrier on farmland at Otama (NW of Gore). There is some debate on whether it is "leucistic" or a "brown" bird.

We are hoping to survey some of Southland's more remote areas in October to get some bird counts done and entered on eBird. We have such a large area to explore and it will be interesting to find out what species are around at this time of the year. We don't have many keen birders down in this part of the country and quite often depend on birders from further north to report on rarities seen in the province.

I have been organising the annual wader counts down here for a number of years now and it is sad to see the decline in wader numbers. I can't remember the last time I saw a Curlew Sandpiper or Eastern Curlew at Awarua Bay, and even Sharp-tailed Sandpipers are rarely seen. The head of the bay back in the 1980s and 1990s was famous for its numbers of species of waders, but not anymore.

PHIL RHODES



1. Thin-billed Prion off Poor Knights Islands/Oscar Thomas (New Zealand Birds Online); 2. Soft-plumaged Petrel off Otago Peninsula/Matthias Dehling; 3. Grey-tailed Tattler, Ashley River estuary/Mike Ashbee; 4. Red-necked Phalarope, Nelson WTP/Matthias Dehling; 5. Lesser Frigatebird at Muriwai beach/Oscar Thomas; 6. Blue Petrel off Poor Knights Islands/Oscar Thomas (New Zealand Birds Online).

Bird News

Some of these sightings have not received official acceptance by the Birds New Zealand Records Appraisal Committee (1st April 2018 to 1st September 2018).

Six **Hoary-headed Grebes** were seen at Lake Elterwater on 4/3. Further day counts of up to 4 birds were recorded there between May and August, and 2 were seen at Lake Ellesmere on 17/6. There were 4 **NZ Dabchicks** at Blenheim WTP on 24/6 and 5 at Lake Killarney (Takaka) on 27/8. An **Australasian Little Grebe** first seen at St. Anne's Lagoon on 25/4 stayed to 5/5. **Northern Shoveler** drakes continued to be reported into winter, with 1 at Waitangi (Hawke's Bay) on 22/4; 1 at Miranda from 19/5 to 16/6; 2 at Lake Ellesmere on 17/6 and 1 on 27/6; 2 at Miranda from 17/6 to 31/7; 1 at Nelson WTP from 16/8 to 30/8; and 1 at Porangahau Estuary (Hawke's Bay) on 24/6. Four **Australian Wood Ducks** were at Playhouse Ponds (Nelson) on 25/5, a **Chestnut-breasted Shelduck** was near Blackmount (Southland) on 19/4, and the 2 long-staying **Plumed Whistling Ducks** were at Anderson Park (Hawke's Bay) on 5/8 and 17/8.

The Renwick **Black Kite** was seen on 18/5 and a **Nankeen Kestrel** was reported at Te Paki farm (Far North) on 8/6. A report submitted to the Rarities Appraisal Committee (RAC) of a **Black Falcon** at Lake Diamond near Wanaka on 22/1 was not accepted. Also notable were 3 **NZ Falcons** seen together in Wellington (30/6) and a **Marsh Crake** near Rawene (8/7).

A **Snares Crested Penguin** was reported from Stewart Island on 18/3 and 18/4. An **Erect-crested Penguin** was at Akaroa on 13/2 and another at Sandfly Bay (Otago Peninsula) on 2/3, and 4 were reported in care at Penguin Place near Taiaroa Head on 3/3. A **Grey-headed Albatross** found near Dargaville in early July and taken into care was released near Opua on 16/7, and a **Light-mantled Sooty Albatross** was seen at-sea off the Poor Knights Islands on 21/7.

Four **Soft-plumaged Petrels** were seen off Otago Peninsula on 26/3, along with 4 **Antarctic Prions** and a **Thin-billed Prion**. A **Blue Petrel** was seen off the Poor Knights Islands on 1/7 with 1 Soft-plumaged Petrel, 5 **Broad-billed Prions**, 21 **Antarctic Prions**, 5 **Salvin's Prions** and 2 **Thin-billed Prions**. A Thin-billed Prion was also found alive on 90 Mile Beach on 24/7. Two more were seen off Kawhia on 5/8, and another off Otago Peninsula on 13/7, along with 1 Antarctic Prion, 1 Salvin's Prion and 20 **Grey Petrels**.

Further north, a beach-cast **White-tailed Tropicbird** was found at Matapouri Bay on 2/3, a **Lesser Frigatebird** found at Muriwai in early March was taken into care and released at

Muriwai on 3/4, and a **Brown Booby** was seen off Omaha Cove (Leigh) on 18/6. Two **Glossy Ibis** were seen near Blenheim WTP on 28/3 and 2/4. Another 1 was seen near Pipiroa (Hauraki) from 4/8 to 8/8 and a **Plumed (Intermediate) Egret** was reported at Maketu (Bay of Plenty) on 28/7 and 2/8.

A **Lesser Sand Plover** reported at Little Waihi (BOP) on 25/3 was seen again on 31/3 and 17/4, and 2 **Greater Sand Plovers** were seen at Big Sand Island (Kaipara) on 4/6. A **Hudsonian Godwit** was at Little Waihi on 11/3, another at Tauranga Harbour on 20/5, and a **Black-tailed Godwit** at Mangere on 20/7. A **Little Whimbrel** was seen at Miranda on 1/3 and a **Grey-tailed Tattler** was at Ashley Estuary from 29/3 to 13/4. A Latham's Snipe was reported on Waiheke Island on 7/3 and a **Red-necked Phalarope** seen at Nelson WTP from 13-17/5 attracted birders from around the country.

A **South Polar Skua** was reported off Karioitahi (Waikato) on 14/7. A **Brown Skua** was seen from a Cook Strait ferry on 10/4 and another was off Tutukaka on 21/7. A report submitted to the RAC of 2 **Pacific Gulls** at Punakaiki on 25/2 was not accepted because the photograph submitted showed a **Southern Black-backed Gull**. A leucistic **Red-billed Gull** was regular at Nelson Haven from late February to 15/4. A **Gull-billed Tern** was seen at Motueka Spit on 2/4 and 25/5, and another was at Lake Ellesmere on 4/4. A **Common Tern** was at Pouto (North Kaipara) on 31/3 and another at Foxton Beach on 4/3. One in breeding plumage was found at Waitangi (Hawke's Bay) on 21/4, and a 1st-year bird was at the same site on 23/4. An **Arctic Tern** was seen off the Poor Knights Islands on 7/7 and a **White-winged Black Tern** at Christchurch oxidation ponds, 3-4/8.

Finally, a rare melanistic **Sacred Kingfisher** was seen at Whakatane on 8/7; single **Laughing Kookaburras** were reported in Henderson (30/3) and Napier (3/6) and there was a pair at Kaukapakapa (Rodney) on 27/8; an Australian **Red-rumped Parrot** was photographed in Napier on 10/3; and the long-staying **Common Myna** in Christchurch was seen to 4/7 and again on 22/8.

Sources: eBird New Zealand, Unusual Bird Report Database, BirdingNZ Forum, Regional Roundup, *New Zealand Birders* Facebook group.



▲ New Zealand King Shags, Duffers Reef, Marlborough Sounds. Photo by Oscar Thomas/New Zealand Birds Online.

▲ Light-mantled Sooty Albatross and Grey-faced Petrel at-sea off the Poor Knights Islands. Photo by Michael Szabo.



Birds New Zealand

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