

# BIRDS NEW ZEALAND

*Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa*

No.31 September 2021



The Magazine of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand



## PUBLISHERS

Published on behalf of the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc), P.O. Box 834, Nelson 7040, New Zealand.

Email: [secretary@birdsNZ.org.nz](mailto:secretary@birdsNZ.org.nz) Website: [www.birdsNZ.org.nz](http://www.birdsNZ.org.nz)

Editor: Michael Szabo, 6/238 The Esplanade, Island Bay, Wellington 6023.

Email: [editor.birdsNZ@birdsNZ.org.nz](mailto:editor.birdsNZ@birdsNZ.org.nz) Tel: (04) 383 5784

ISSN 2357-1586 (Print) ISSN 2357-1594 (Online)

We welcome advertising. Free classified ads for members are at the editor's discretion. Articles or photographs of birds in New Zealand or the South Pacific are welcome such as news about birds, members' activities, birding sites, identification, or letters. Copy deadlines are 10th Feb, May, Aug and 1st Nov. Views expressed by contributors do not necessarily represent those of OSNZ (Inc) or the editor. When you are finished with your magazine please consider passing it on to others who are interested in New Zealand's birds.



Photo: Rachel Hufton.

## First Makarora Field Camp

The first Aspiring Biodiversity Trust Makarora Field Course was held 10–16 January 2021, with support from the Birds New Zealand Project Assistance Fund and the Morrison Donation. The course was a huge success with excellent collaboration and perfect weather. The birds showed up and the 12 students from Wellington, Auckland and the Coromandel had an awesome and rewarding experience.

There was a series of learning activities focused on biological fauna and flora survey methods and monitoring with classroom sessions on data analysis, reporting and the use of the R Stats Application via an overseas connection with lecturers in the UK. The evenings were filled with lectures on geophisography, protected species dog aided surveys (Whio), a forest night walk, and finished with a session on careers in conservation and wildlife management with an inspiring and motivational finish for the future from the Trust's patron, Lydia Bradey, who was recently awarded a New Zealand Order of Merit.

RACHEL HUFTON

||||||| NO.31 SEPTEMBER 2021 |||||

- 4 From the President's Desk
- 5 Natalie Forsdick is our new OSNZ Vice-President
- 6 Minutes of the 81st AGM of the OSNZ
- 8 David Lawrie elected a new Fellow of OSNZ
- 9 Dr Murray Williams elected a new Fellow of OSNZ
- 10 Ten great pelagic seabird-watching trips
- 14 New Zealand Bird Atlas update
- 15 Notornis, Student & People's Choice Awards
- 16 Regional Roundup
- 19 Binoculars review

## COVER IMAGE

South Island Robin or Kakarūwai.

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



## First Black-fronted Tern in Australia

A Black-fronted Tern — a species endemic to NZ — was photographed at Fort Scratchley, NSW, by Jon Spicer-Bell in late June (above), the first record of this species in Australia. "It's a pretty huge sea-crossing for this species, one which usually stays within sight of land," said Mike Bell of Wildlife Management International, who has worked with the species for decades.

## Benefits of membership

You can join Birds New Zealand online right now for just \$1.50 a week. Our new subscription rate of \$80 per year is very reasonable, and for students its just \$40 per year:

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

Members receive our quarterly colour magazine, *Birds New Zealand*, our quarterly journal, *Notornis*, occasional special editions, plus a free Birds New Zealand branded lens cloth. To join, just fill out the membership form online here: <https://www.birdsNZ.org.nz/membership/membership-form-nz/#join>

Or contact our Membership Secretary:

[membership@birdsNZ.org.nz](mailto:membership@birdsNZ.org.nz)

Or contact your nearest Regional Representative:

[www.birdsNZ.org.nz/contact](http://www.birdsNZ.org.nz/contact)



# ADVENTURES IN BIRDING NEW ZEALAND AND BEYOND



© M. Crouch



**Explore New Zealand's remote, wildlife rich wilderness with pioneering Kiwi expedition cruise company Heritage Expeditions aboard their fleet of purpose-built vessels.**

## **Islands of the Hauraki Gulf**

Explore the island sanctuaries of Great Barrier, Mokohinau, Tiritiri Matangi, Cavalli and Bay of Islands, and Whangamumu Harbour, 8 days.

7-14 & 14-21 Jan, 12-19 Mar 2022 **From NZ\$5,775pp**

## **Discover Marlborough Sounds**

Discover the tranquil waterways, wildlife and rich history of New Zealand's Marlborough Sounds on an unforgettable 7-day Kiwi adventure exploring Queen Charlotte and Pelorus Sounds, French Pass and d'Urville Island. 13-19 Apr & 26 Apr - 2 May 2022

**From NZ\$4,950pp**

## **Northern Fiords Explorer**

Experience the primordial majesty of Fiordland's Milford, Bligh, George, Caswell, Nancy, Thompson and Doubtful Sounds on this 8-day adventure.

1-7 Jul & 24-30 Aug 2022 **From NZ\$5,295pp**

## **Southern Fiords Discovery**

Experience the grand scale scenery and unique wildlife of Fiordland's Preservation and Chalky Inlets and Doubtful and Dusky Sounds on this 7-day exploration of the Southern Fiords.

8-14 Aug & 5-11 Sep 2022

**From NZ\$5,495pp** Includes scenic helicopter transfer!

## **Unseen Stewart Island**

Discover wildlife-rich Stewart Island/Rakiura, Oban, Ulva Island, Paterson Inlet, Port Adventure, Port Pegasus, Lords River and more on this 8-day voyage.

18-25 Oct & 26 Oct - 2 Nov 2022 **From NZ\$6,125pp**

## **Subantarctic Expeditions**

Discover our signature voyages exploring the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of the Subantarctic Islands.

## **Galapagos of the Southern Ocean**

Journey through the spectacular wildlife havens of the UNESCO World Heritage Subantarctic Islands, explore remote, rugged terrains off the tourist route where wildlife and intriguing flora abound.

30 Nov - 12 Dec 2021 **From US\$8,550pp**

## **Beyond Fiordland: NZ's Wildest Islands**

Explore the Fiordland's ice-carved mountains, forests and fiords, encounter threatened native species flourishing on Stewart Island's Ulva Island and discover the wildlife havens of New Zealand's Subantarctic Auckland, Campbell and Snares Islands.

31 Dec 2021 - 10 Jan 2022 **From US\$6,395pp**

## **Chatham Islands: A Land Apart**

Observe endemic wildlife on the Chatham, Antipodes, Mangere, Little Mangere, Bounty Islands and Pyramid Rock looking for Erect-crested Penguins, Magenta Petrel/Chatham Island Taiko and Black/Chatham Island Robin. 12 - 21 Mar 2022

**From US\$5,450pp**

## **Birding Down Under**

The ultimate Southern Ocean birding voyage, join us on this signature expedition of the Snares, Auckland, Macquarie, Campbell, Antipodes, Bounty, Stewart, Chatham, South East, Mangere and Little Mangere Islands, including Pyramid Rock.

3-19 Dec 2022 **From US\$13,675pp**



**See our new 2022-23 season online now**

**Voyages fill fast, reserve your space now!**

Freephone 0800 262 8873 [info@heritage-expeditions.com](mailto:info@heritage-expeditions.com)

[WWW.HERITAGE-EXPEDITIONS.COM](http://WWW.HERITAGE-EXPEDITIONS.COM)



**Heritage Expeditions**  
New Zealand

# From the President's Desk

It was such a pleasure to be with you all in June at Thames. For me, the 2021 NZ Bird Conference was a well-run and exciting weekend. I think that with some 227 registrations the 2021 conference must be the biggest event ever hosted by the Society. A highlight was standing in the morning tea room and looking across a room which was full of animated conversations on everything ornithological.

I'd like to extend my grateful appreciation to the organising committee from the South Auckland Region for such a relaxing weekend. Even the field trips on the Monday were full of surprises and interesting observations. My highlight was a flock of 33 Brown Teal seen off a bridge on the Port Jackson Road. They were in association with 45 Pukeko which was quite a sight as well!

I'd like to welcome Johannes Fischer (Wellington), Don Goodale (Canterbury), and Paul Griffiths (Nelson) who have stepped up as new Regional Representatives. These crucial roles make sure that the Society does work, and that there is a point of contact between the members and the wider Society, and members of the public. Welcome to all three of you and I hope you enjoy your time in these roles. At the same time I'd like to highlight the enormous contribution by all the Regional Representatives throughout the country. This role is essential to the effective running of the Society.

## Council meeting

The Council met and had a full meeting in Thames. We reviewed the series of reports that we had received from the Regional Representatives and the Society's scheme convenors. As I noted in my report to members, these reports show the wide range of activities of the Society throughout New Zealand. Council also discussed our ongoing requirement to manage the costs of all of our activities to match our discretionary income. This remains a focus for Council.

We also had a good meeting with Dan Burgin and Pat Crowe on progress with the NZ Bird Atlas project. They reported an ongoing increase in the rate of participation in the project. They also noted the success of the monthly challenges that they have been advertising, and discussed the ongoing support that they receive from Cornell University.

Council also had a very productive meeting with Regional Representatives. We discussed the Atlas project and the successes of the youth camps. Council also spent some discussing how to contact and engage with the network of sanctuaries, and encourage them to join the Society.

Earlier in the year Council had commissioned Michael Szabo to undertake a review of the Society's current approach to Communications, Membership, and Fundraising. He presented his report to the Council and we briefed the Regional Representatives on this when we met in Thames. The review is comprehensive and ranges from the easy and immediate through to rule changes and significant budgetary items. Council is of the opinion that the ideas and initiatives included in the review are extremely valuable and need to be implemented over the next few years.

## Annual General Meeting

The 81st Annual General Meeting was held at Thames. The meeting was well supported with about 100 members present. I was pleased to be able to present a full report of the Society's activities for 2020. A copy of my report is posted online here: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Annual-Report-for-2020.pdf>

The Society's Secretary Lynne Anderson was able to report to the AGM that nominations had been called for vacant positions on Council and four nominations for President, Treasurer, and two Council members were received. Lynne was able to announce that Bruce McKinlay, Paul Garner-Richards, Ian Armitage, and Natalie Forsdick were elected to Council.

I was able to follow this up with the announcement that Natalie Forsdick had stepped up into the position of Vice-President. The AGM also passed the three motions which had previously been notified. These related to the changing of the name of the Society to reflect our branding, changes to the timing of the subscription rules, and an increase in the Society's subscriptions. These changes all contribute to updating the way the Society operates and help to ensure our viability into the future.

## Website redevelopment

Council has signed off on the third and final phase of the redevelopment of the Society's website. We have contracted Xequals of Wellington to undertake this important and complex task, and I'm pleased to advise that work commenced in early August. Initially, Phase III involves the migration of the entire website to a new server.

The next step is construction of a more efficient database for the *Notornis*, *Birds New Zealand* magazine, and rare/unusual birds components that will, in particular, have greatly improved search functions. Thirdly, a series of occasional papers will be developed that will enable lengthy technical material about ornithology to be produced without the cost of hard copy publication. A fourth step is construction of a mechanism that will enable members using their computers at home to enter Beach Patrol information into the database.

Council is extremely grateful for a generous and anonymous donation to support the development of Phase III of the website. Website development will be completed this year and will result in more efficient website services to members and lower maintenance costs.

## Society Awards

As part of the conference weekend the Society awarded two fellowships to members to recognise lifetime commitments to the Society and the study of birds in New Zealand. It was a real pleasure to be able to recognise the contributions made by Dr Murray Williams and David Lawrie. Council also agreed to the awarding of a Meritorious Service Award to Dr Bruce Mackareth of Thames for his long-term commitment to surveys of shorebirds around the Coromandel.

I think it is important that we recognise those among us who do contribute sometimes over decades, and so I encourage all members to think of nominating fellow members for an award. In the first instance, I encourage a conversation with your Regional Representative.

## NZ Bird Conference 2022

Finally, arrangements are well in hand for the 2022 NZ Bird Conference in Christchurch. Nick Allen and his team have confirmed a venue and are starting to put together a programme. I'm already looking forward to this weekend.

BRUCE MCKINLAY, PRESIDENT



## Natalie Forsdick is our new Vice-President

Tēnā koutou kātoa. Ko Natalie Forsdick toku ingoa. I am excited to be stepping up as the new Vice-President of Birds New Zealand. After completing my PhD at the University of Otago in 2020, I joined Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Auckland. My research focuses on the genetics of our threatened endemic species to support their conservation. My current research projects involve both birds and insects, and are conducted in partnership with mana whenua, Department of Conservation, and Genomics Aotearoa.



■ Natalie Forsdick

I joined Birds New Zealand ahead of the 2017 Te Anau annual conference, where I presented research from my Master's project at the University of Canterbury investigating genetic diversity in the Kakarua/Chatham Island Black Robin, for which I was awarded Best Student Presentation. This, along with the warm welcome from my local Otago region led by Mary Thompson, led to me becoming more engaged with the Society. I am grateful to Birds New Zealand for providing funding for part of my doctoral research, using new genomic sequencing tools to understand the impacts of hybridisation between Kākī/Black Stilts and Poaka/Pied Stilts. I had the opportunity to give back to the Society and represent the student voice when I was elected to the Birds New Zealand Council in 2018. Through my role on Council, I have developed an understanding of the breadth of research and community projects underway that aim to understand our manu and their habitats.

With my research largely consisting of lab and computational work, participating in Society events gives me the opportunity to enjoy time with our birds in the outdoors. I learn more on every outing, and as Vice-President I hope to put my enthusiasm to good use as we look to the future for our growing Society.

NATALIE FORSDICK, VICE-PRESIDENT

## In Memory of Lesley Gowans

It is with sadness that we acknowledge the death of long-time Birds New Zealand member and friend, Lesley Gowans, who was an important part of the history of the Otago Branch.



■ Lesley Gowans (R) with Mary Thompson (L).

She was actively involved in all aspects, from monthly meetings, field trips, and research projects, to attending conferences. For over 20 years she did the twice-yearly counts of waders at Aramoana, and spent many hours on the estuaries with Peter Schweigman re-sighting banded godwits and spoonbills, which provided important data on migration patterns.

For over 10 years, fortnightly during Spring, she was part of teams that counted birds at Orokonui Ecosanctuary before and after the fence was built. For five years, she took part in many surveys gathering bird sightings for the previous NZ Bird Atlas project, and coordinating our Millennium Project surveys of kingfishers in Otago. Lesley's enthusiasm and delight in watching birds made her great company on the many field trips we shared. Her Birds New Zealand friends will each have their own happy recollections of birding with Lesley.

MARY THOMPSON, OTAGO REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

## 2022 Membership Renewals

Annual membership subscriptions are due on 1st January 2022. See page 7 for the table of new subscription rates. Renewal invoices will be emailed or posted in November 2021. You can renew your subscription via the website, either by direct debit payment or credit card payment: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/login/#myaccount>

Please pay promptly as we depend on your subscription to continue our work encouraging and supporting the study and enjoyment of birds. Please also notify the Membership Secretary of your email address if you have not previously done so ([membership@birdsnz.org.nz](mailto:membership@birdsnz.org.nz)).

## The Gift of Birds

Are you looking for a Christmas gift to give? You can gift someone a 2022 Birds New Zealand subscription for \$1.50 a week to help foster a lifetime of study, knowledge, and enjoyment of birds. Please send an email to [eo@osnz.org.nz](mailto:eo@osnz.org.nz) and we will send you the Gift Voucher, or visit our website for more details:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/you-can-help/buy-a-gift-voucher/>

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

Nominations are called for these awards, to be with the Birds New Zealand Secretary ([secretary@osnz.org.nz](mailto:secretary@osnz.org.nz)) or (P.O. Box 834, Nelson, 7040) by 31st December 2021. Please use the standard forms which can be found on the Birds New Zealand website <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/about-us/manual/> or obtained from your Regional Representative. The Awards committee will send its recommendations to Council for consideration at its summer meeting. More information on award procedures is available from the Birds New Zealand Secretary, or the website (Manual / Guidelines).

## New members

Birds New Zealand warmly welcomes the following new members: Diana Galbraith (Far North); Keith Townsend, Jacob Ball (Northland); Robyn Fond, Jill Samson, Philip Tierney, Maisie Ramsay, Srinivasarao Koripella, Kayla Hegedus, Claire Hotchin, Karen Ramsay, Robert Beattie, Michael Fox (Auckland); Darion Rowan (South Auckland); Judith Brussen, Arna Carlson, Rob Chappell (Waikato); John Black, Reuben Aikman, Stuart Attwood (Bay of Plenty); Barry Foster, Gillian Ward (Gisborne Wairoa); Ray Priest, Pauline Priest (Taranaki); Libby Smales, Colin Shields (Hawke's Bay); Paul Jones, Carren Jones (Whanganui); Alison Wallbutton, Donavin de Jager, Caitlin McLeod, Kate Pickard (Manawatu); Heidi Benson, Samhita Bose, Angus Fordham, Melody McLaughlin, Ross Pickard, Jennifer Lake (Wellington); Keith Webby; Ellen Webb (Marlborough); Brian Lloyd, Belinda Heaphy (Nelson); Inge Bolt (West Coast); Sue Mullord, Peter Langlands, Jim Bell, Katie Dunlop, Ruud Kleinpaste (Canterbury); Alan Coster, Gay Buckingham, Marissa Le Lec, Benjamin J Perry, Katie Gray, James Hunter-Ayad, Caroline Decourt, Arlene McDowell (Otago); Jason van de Wetering, Maddie van de Wetering, Anja Kohler, James Savage (Southland); Michael A. Woodley of Menie (Rest of World).

## Donations

Birds New Zealand also thanks the following members for their generous donations: Carren Jones, James Hunter-Ayad, Jim Bell, James Savage, Barry Foster, John Black, Jill Samson, and Ellen Webb.

## Calling for old bands and banders of old!

If you have any stocks of old bands, or contact details for any 'banders of old', please contact us at: [bandingoffice@doc.govt.nz](mailto:bandingoffice@doc.govt.nz). Many 'banders of old' still hold stock and old data, so we are keen to contact them to update our records.

MICHELLE BRADSHAW



▲ 2021 New Zealand Bird Conference in Thames. Photo by Michael Szabo.

## Minutes of the 81<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Ornithological Society of NZ

Held at Thames Civic Centre, Thames on 6th June 2021, commencing at 3.30 pm.

### Present

Council members: Bruce McKinlay (President), Ian Armitage, Natalie Forsdick, Colin Miskelly, Keith Woodley, Lynne Anderson, Ingrid Hutzler (EO) and 100 members.

### Welcome

President Bruce McKinlay welcomed everyone to the AGM.

### Apologies

Mike and Glenys Glover, Peter Frost, Diane and Michael Lookman, Derry and Isabella Godbert, Eleanor Gunby, Mel Galbraith, Josie Galbraith, Paul Garner-Richards, Bill Cash, John Stewart, Imogen Warren.

**Motion: That the apologies be accepted. Bruce McKinlay / Ian Armitage. Carried**

### Recent Deaths

The meeting recalled with sadness the recent deaths of Dr William ("Bill") Greenwood, Ian Charles Bell, Reg Cotter, Connie Wright, John Douglas, Efys Graham, Anthea Goodwin, Julie Fryer, Leslie Gowan, Gwyneth Norman, Frank Austin, Elliot Dawson, and Bice Tennyson.

### Minutes of the 2019 AGM

(No AGM was held in 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions)

**Motion: That the minutes of the last AGM in 2019, as circulated, be accepted as a true and correct record. Ian Armitage / Michael Szabo. Carried.**

### Matters Arising

There was a question asking whether there had been any further developments with NZ Young Birders. The President replied that he is sorting out a succession plan to get it up and running again.

### Treasurer's Report

The President gave a summary of the Treasurer's Report, commenting that it was very concerning that the Society ran a deficit and that expenditure exceeded income in the previous year. He noted in this regard that 2020 saw some exceptional one-off costs, for example two special editions of *Notornis*.

He reported that the Council was considering ways to turn this around, including raising more funds and working towards the option of having electronic copies of publications available to members as an alternative to hard copies.

The Statement of Financial Performance showed a \$65,525 deficit and the Statement of Financial Position showed net assets at \$262,000, which is considerably lower than the previous year. The full Financial Report had been posted on the Society's website: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/2020-Audited-Annual-Report.pdf>

Comments: A member from the South Auckland Branch said that rather than stopping spending, it's better to go out and raise more income. He enquired as to whether the Society has a fundraiser and said that there is money out there and that there are many people wanting to support worthwhile organisations and the

important work they do, such as Birds New Zealand.

Another member commented that we need to raise Birds New Zealand to a higher level and set our sights higher with a larger number of worthwhile projects.

Another member asked if the Society can cut costs any further. Another member asked what members get for their subscription and suggested there should be a lower subscription rate if members get electronic copies of the Society's publications.

Another member suggested that Birds New Zealand's mission statement should include the word 'advocacy' - ie, '... foster the study, knowledge, enjoyment and advocacy of birds.' Doing this, they said, could increase membership and the opportunities for raising more funds for the Society.

The President replied that Council had commissioned Michael Szabo earlier in the year to conduct a review of communications, membership, and fundraising activities for the Society. His review, recently received, is very comprehensive with various options for increasing income and membership, and Council will work through it in the coming months.

**Motion: That the Treasurer's Report and financial statements be accepted. Bruce McKinlay / David Lawrie. Carried**

### President's Report

Bruce McKinlay presented his annual report for 2020 in which he noted that Council was made aware of a few health and safety issues and that regional representatives had been asked to keep reporting any others, and that the last three Council meetings were held via Zoom, which saved the Society on travel costs.

Two special editions of *Notornis* were published in 2020 - 'Lost Gold' (*Ornithology of the Sub-Antarctic Auckland Islands*) and *Wader Studies in New Zealand*. He acknowledged and thanked Craig Symes, Paul Sagar, Colin Miskelly, and Keith Woodley for their work on these.

He expressed gratitude to the Society's partners, T-Gear Trust and Goodness Kitchen, for their generous support, and noted that a new advertiser has started advertising in Birds New Zealand magazine - optics company Swarovski.

Two new MOUs were signed with Forest and Bird and Manaaki Whenua-Landcare Research respectively, and the Society's Strategy (2015-2025) had been revised and finalised.

The membership of the Society continued to grow, and now stood at some 1,200 people. The Society's social media platforms on Facebook and Twitter also continued to grow, with the former now having 9,500 followers and the latter 2,814 followers.

The Society started operating the new "MembershipWorks" database management system in July 2020, thanks to the hard work and dedication of Imogen Warren (Membership Secretary) and Roger Sharp (Web Support).

Council received Michael Szabo's review of Communications, Membership and Fundraising in May, and the Society itself made submissions on various conservation matters. The President asked anyone making a submission to please send it to Council. The President noted that the Society is a voluntary organisation that relied on the energy and enthusiasm of its office holders.





■ The Society's Council and Regional Representatives met the day before the Thames conference.

He asked the office holders present to stand and thanked them for all the efforts and work they put into the Society, which gave everyone present an opportunity to show their appreciation.

The office holders were: Craig Symes (*Notornis* editor); Michael Szabo (*Birds New Zealand* editor); the WMIL team of Pat Crowe, Dan Burgin, and Mike Bell for their contributions to the NZ Bird Atlas Scheme; and Scheme Convenors Colin Miskelly (Records Appraisal Committee), Graeme Taylor (Scientific Committee), Adrian Riegen (Wader Census), other Scheme Convenors in absentia; Ingrid Hutzler (Executive Officer); all Regional Representatives present; and all Council Members present. John Cockrem then asked Bruce McKinlay to stand and all members present thanked him with an ovation.

**Motion: That the President's report be accepted. Bruce McKinlay / David Lawrie. Carried**

#### Matters Arising

A member asked if the Society had a formal contract with WMIL for the NZ Bird Atlas project? The President replied to say that, yes, there was a contract, and the Council received quarterly reports of progress and quarterly payments, and that the Cornell Lab of Ornithology maintained the portal.

Another member asked if Council was working on formalising plans for RRs? The President said that all office holders are volunteers, which is respected and appreciated, and that it was recognised that many RRs feel that they must stick to the role with no-one to take over from them. A few regions are without an RR and Council is trying to find a solution to this.

Another member commented that a few regions without an RR did not feel connected to the Society and asked how this can be rectified? The President replied that each region is different and that Council was working to resolve the issue. He also mentioned that there is an RR Role Description on the website and encouraged everyone present to read it.

#### Election of Officers

The Society's Secretary Lynne Anderson announced that four incumbent Council members were re-elected unopposed: Bruce McKinlay (President), Paul Garner-Richards (Treasurer), Ian Armitage, and Natalie Forsdick. Ian Armitage did not wish to be re-elected as Vice-President. The President announced that the new Vice-President for the Society is Natalie Forsdick. Outgoing Vice-President Ian Armitage congratulated Natalie Forsdick for accepting the role of VP and commented what a significant moment in governance this was for the Society as she is the first ever female VP for the entire organisation.

#### Amendments to the Constitution

A notice of motion had previously been published, as follows:

##### 1. Society Name:

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

##### 2. Subscription date:

6.2 The full annual subscription shall be payable on the

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

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

6.5 To be repealed.

#### 3. Subscription Rates

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

  

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

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

**Discussion:** The meeting agreed to debate the three notices as one item of business.

**Society Name:** The President was asked to explain the name changes. He said 'The Ornithological Society of New Zealand' is the scientific name and will always be the official and legal name. 'Birds New Zealand' is the popular, more user-friendly name and noted that many people would shy away from the Society if it was known only as OSNZ. The Māori name Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa recognises correct protocol and can be used with either of the other two names. The name change was also formalising the rebranding of the Society carried out previously.

**Subscription Change date:** That this is a good thing and was welcomed.

**Motion: That the meeting accept all constitutional amendments as proposed. Bruce McKinlay / Ian Armitage. Carried**

#### Meritorious Service Awards (MSA)

The President announced that Dr Bruce MacKereth has been awarded an MSA for his significant and sustained services to Ornithology, especially in the Coromandel Peninsula. He was not present to receive the award. He also noted that Bev Alexander from Canterbury had also been awarded an MSA which was presented to her last year.

#### General Business

**The Fledging Fund:** The President explained that the Fledging Fund had been set up to help enable more young people to travel to conferences, to become involved, and for travel expenses not to be a barrier.



▲ David Lawrie (L) and Dr Murray Williams (R) with President Bruce McKinlay. Photo by M Szabo.



▲ Birds New Zealand Council at the Thames conference. Photo by M Szabo.

## David Lawrie elected as a Fellow of the Ornithological Society of NZ

Through his keen life-long interest in birds and enthusiasm for the science of ornithology, David has been actively involved with the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (OSNZ) for more than 60 years. He is one of the most consistently active and longer-serving members of the Society.

With his approachable personality, cheerful humour, and eagerness to "speak up" for the interests of birds and their habitats, David has strongly encouraged and supported his friends, colleagues, and others to become careful observers of birds and to encourage them in a range of studies. He has been and continues to be a tireless advocate for the Society and for promoting interest in it, and has encouraged many people to take up birding and become members of the Society, often going out of his way to do so.

David has always been ready and willing to mentor others in the practical aspects of accurate observation and careful recording of the occurrence and behaviour of birds. He has always been an astute observer of birds and although he has published few papers in *'Notornis'* on his studies he has provided abundant support to others, several of whom are now dedicated professional or amateur ornithologists. For decades he has meticulously recorded bird sightings and behaviour around his property, data which are now an invaluable historic record for *eBird*.

David has held and served in all official roles in OSNZ, and in doing so he progressively strengthened its governance and elevated the standing of the Society in the wider community. It is a tribute to David's efforts that the Society has become more widely known as a respected source of sound information about birds in New Zealand and the South Pacific. David always takes a broad interest in birds through his enthusiastic engagement with other organisations and in doing so has helped establish enduring linkages with OSNZ.

Significant and valuable contributions to the leadership of OSNZ made by David have been: South Auckland Regional Representative for 14 years (1995-2008); Councillor for 16 years (2002-2018); Vice-President for two years (2006-2008); Acting-President (Nov 2008-May 2009), and President for nine years (2009-2018).

David has also made substantial contributions to the implementation of several of the Society's long-term study schemes, notably the National Wader Counts, Arctic Wader Colour-banding Scheme, all three NZ Bird Atlas Schemes, Beach Patrol Scheme, and Nest Record Scheme. He also contributed to the design and production of a set of maps describing where to watch birds in NZ. He has also been a keen supporter of and contributor to Australasian Ornithological Conferences (AOC), serving on the AOC governing Board for OSNZ.

If one specific and important contribution can be singled out it is this: David has consistently helped to organise and participate in annual censuses of waders in the Firth of Thames and in the Manukau Harbour since the mid-1960s, spanning more than 55 years. In doing so he has helped build up our knowledge of

population trends in both Arctic and NZ breeding species, timing of migration, locations and feeding habits. Armed with the knowledge about waders gained by David and others, he took a lead in the preparation and presentation of submissions on behalf of the Society during development of the Auckland Unitary Plan concerning a compelling need for protection of critically important wader habitats around the Manukau Harbour.

Beyond David's lasting accomplishments for ornithology, he has held key roles in other organisations through which the interests of the Ornithological Society have been well represented and advanced. He was instrumental in helping establish the Pūkoro Miramira Naturalists' Trust, now a vitally important scientific, training, information and public relations centre for ornithology that is well-known in NZ and overseas; he has been a member of the Pūkoro Miramira Council since 1976, and was Chairman (2000-2010) and Treasurer (1981-1999). He has represented the Trust at five international Meetings of Partners of the East Asian Australasian Flyway Partnership, always funding himself to do so.

He was a councillor, and Vice President of the Auckland Acclimatization Society for 10 years and was then Chair of the NZ Fish and Game Council (1990-2001). In 2004 he was awarded a Gold Medal by Fish and Game for his substantial achievements in fish and game management. According to the award citation: "Under his chairmanship the 13 Fish and Game Councils, the heirs of the restructured Acclimatisation Societies, have achieved a high level of cooperation and coordination as Fish and Game NZ. This has meant Fish and Game NZ has developed into a sophisticated and effective organisation and caused it to become a powerful national advocate for the environment."

In 1999 David was co-founder of the National Wetland Trust. He was the Trust's inaugural Chairman and is currently Treasurer. He was founding Chairman of the NZ Game Bird Habitat Trust (1993-2008). He was, for many years, a local committee member of the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society, and received an 'Old Blue Award' in 2003. He also served two terms on the Waikato Conservation Board.

In 2005 David was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM) for services to ornithology. This Order is awarded by the Queen to those "who in any field of endeavour, have rendered meritorious service to the Crown and the nation or who have become distinguished by their eminence, talents, contributions, or other merits".

Council is of the unanimous view that David Lawrie has rendered distinguished service to NZ ornithology for more than 30 years through his tireless encouragement and support of many people who have become careful observers of birds, and through his promotion of ornithological science. No less importantly, David has provided enduring long-term leadership as an influential office holder at all levels, thereby substantially strengthening the governance of the Society. Council is delighted to Elect David as a Fellow of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand.





▣ Pāteke pair with ducklings, Woolleys Bay, Northland. Malcolm Pullman/NZ Birds Online.

## Dr Murray Williams elected as a Fellow of the Ornithological Society of NZ

Dr Murray Williams has made a sustained and substantial contribution to ornithology throughout his long scientific career, commencing with doctorate studies on shelduck at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. Murray has maintained a keen interest in waterfowl from his student days and has always been challenged by questions concerning the taxonomy, behaviour, ecology and conservation of waterfowl. He has encouraged ornithologists to be more rigorous and to challenge their assumptions through his university teaching, his editorship of *Notornis* and through his typically insightful questions and comments at seminars and conferences.

Murray had a long-time career as a waterfowl biologist with the NZ Wildlife Service and in the Department of Conservation before joining the School of Biological Sciences at Victoria University of Wellington to teach restoration ecology.

Initially his research focused on game species, especially Black Swan, Grey Duck, Mallard and Paradise Shelduck, which was of considerable value to the former Acclimatisation Societies responsible for managing gamebirds. For example, he documented the impact of the 1968 Wahine storm on Lake Ellesmere's Black Swans and why it took so long for the population to recover. He also revealed the extensive dispersal movements of swans and how this influenced regional numbers. In collaboration with NZ Wildlife Service colleagues, he studied hybridisation between Grey Duck and the introduced Mallard, a topic he has returned to in recent years. His study of Paradise Shelduck in the Gisborne region was the first detailed research on the species' breeding success, population dynamics, moult and habitat selection, leading to a much better understanding of the bird's ecology and management as a game species. In 1981 Murray brought together the results of his and others' waterfowl studies in his excellent book for hunters, *The Duckshooter's Bag*.

Murray has undertaken scientific studies of more of NZ's living and extinct waterfowl species than most other scientists including Grey Duck, Mallard, Black Swan, Canada Goose, Australasian Shoveler, Paradise Shelduck, Brown Teal, Campbell Island Teal, Auckland Island Teal and Blue Duck. This demonstrates a remarkable record of undertaking and then publishing the results of his research so that game and conservation managers can better manage these species. Murray also published studies on the extinct Chatham Island Duck and two species of NZ Merganser.

Throughout his career he has been at the forefront of his scientific discipline and is one of NZ's outstanding ornithologists. He has combined a rigorous and insightful scientific mind with an ability to translate his research outcomes into practical management and conservation actions. This is a rare and valuable combination. Murray's focus has been the ecology, conservation, management and exploitation of NZ's waterfowl and their wetland habitats. He has published many scientific papers in *Notornis*, *NZ Journal of Ecology*, *Journal of Wildlife Management*, and *Pacific Conservation Biology and Conservation Genetics*. Murray has made important contributions to gamebird management and threatened waterfowl conservation, engaged with Fish and Game councils and their members, and been an advocate, at times publicly, about management of waterfowl.

Gradually, Murray's research moved towards studies on rare

and endangered waterfowl. This change in focus in the late 1970s commenced with his studies of Brown Teal and how to increase their small wild populations with the release of captive-bred birds. This progressed to studies of the bird's breeding and population dynamics in Northland and Great Barrier Island. He next worked on Blue Duck, initially in regard to potential impacts from planned hydroelectric projects in the Central North Island, later expanding to investigations of distribution, numbers, feeding niches and conservation genetics.

He was the obvious person to undertake field studies of Auckland Island Teal and Campbell Island Teal, which have underpinned the successful conservation programmes for these endangered species. A notable highlight of Murray's career was his pioneering work on the recovery of the critically endangered Campbell Island Teal. He was the driving force for bringing 'Swampy', the first Campbell Island Teal seen and caught in over 50 years, back to the NZ mainland in 1984. His work with 'Swampy' led to the captive breeding programme, and the writing of the Subantarctic teal recovery plan in 1993. The successful breeding of Campbell Island Teal was in large part due to Murray's efforts.

Murray also studied the Auckland Island Teal in the Auckland Islands and rewrote the breeding plan. This programme was a great success and subsequently led to healthy populations of Auckland Island Teal becoming established on subantarctic islands.

More recently, Murray and his colleagues studied the extinct Auckland Island Merganser and showed that the related Chatham Island Merganser was a separate species. He also studied the extinct Chatham Island Duck, demonstrating it was flightless and the largest known member of its genus, *Anas*.

In retirement, he has continued with his waterfowl studies, focusing on Grey Duck, Mallard, Canada Goose, and Australasian Shoveler; he has regularly made presentations to Society conferences.

Murray is an excellent communicator. His skills have enabled him to show field managers how scientific information can be used to advance the management of birds, whether they are game species or endangered species. He is a popular and engaging presenter of seminars and talks, and has spoken often at OSNZ conferences and regional meetings, and meetings of Ducks Unlimited, Fish and Game Councils, the NZ Ecological Society, and at international conferences.

Murray was editor of *Notornis* (2003-2006) and was elected as a Councillor of the Society (2010-2013). With a strong linkage to the Society, Murray was Vice-Chair of the Scientific Programme Committee for the International Ornithological Congress held in Christchurch in 1990. He is a past Council member and President (1988-90) of the NZ Ecological Society, and he authored and co-authored 30 papers in *Notornis* (1963-2021).

Council is of the unanimous view that Dr Murray Williams has rendered distinguished service to NZ ornithology through his wide-ranging waterfowl research, his major contributions to endangered species management, his engaging communication skills, and his participation at office-holder levels in the Society. Council is delighted to Elect Murray as a Fellow of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand.



■ Pink-footed Shearwater.

# Ten great mainland pelagic trips in Aotearoa New Zealand

Written by Michael Szabo Photographs by Mike Ashbee

Going out to sea on a pelagic seabird-watching trip offers the chance to see and photograph amazing seabirds, such as albatrosses and petrels. It is also an opportunity to submit eBird checklists to the NZ Bird Atlas.

Pelagic seabird-watching trips have become increasingly popular with more being organised in recent years. The ten pelagic trips described here are all single day trips from a mainland location. This selection does not include multi-day expeditions to more distant offshore islands, such as the Kermadec/Rangitāhua, Three Kings/Manawatā, Chatham/Rēkohu, or Subantarctic islands, nor any multi-day coastal cruises. These day trips are listed from south to north and are not ranked according to any judgement of which is 'best'.

If you want to join a pelagic trip, relevant contacts are given in each description below, or you can watch for new notifications when they are posted to the BirdingNZ.net forum ([www.birdingnz.net/forum/viewforum.php?f=4](http://www.birdingnz.net/forum/viewforum.php?f=4)) or to the 'New Zealand Birders' group on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/groups/857726274293085](https://www.facebook.com/groups/857726274293085)).

## Oban off the Stewart Island/Rakiura coast

The first Stewart Island/Rakiura pelagic trips organised in the 2000s were led by Brent Stephenson and Ian 'Sav' Saville of Wrybill Tours, but in recent years they have also been guided by Matt Jones. The trips with Aurora Charters depart from Oban and head out through Paterson Inlet to explore deeper waters off the east coast of Rakiura. Schedule: mainly warmer months.

Notable seabird species recorded at sea include four species of penguin (Little, Fiordland Crested, Yellow-eyed, Snares Crested), eleven species of albatross (Antipodean/Gibson's, Southern

Royal, Northern Royal, White-capped, Salvin's, Chatham, Buller's, Grey-headed, Campbell, Black-browed, Light-mantled Sooty), Southern and Northern Giant Petrel, Antarctic Fulmar, ten species of petrel (Cape, Mottled, Cook's, Grey-faced, White-chinned, Westland, White-headed, White-naped, Gould's, Soft-plumaged), nine species of shearwater (Buller's, Hutton's, Fluttering, Sooty, Short-tailed, Subantarctic Little, Great, Flesh-footed, Pink-footed), four species of storm petrel (Grey-backed, White-faced, Black-bellied, Wilson's), three species of prion (Fairy, Broad-billed, Antarctic), Common Diving Petrel, Foveaux Shag, Spotted Shag, three species of skua (Brown, Arctic, Pomarine) and three species of tern (Arctic, Antarctic, Black-fronted). Marine mammals recorded include Humpback Whale, Southern Right Whale, Orca, Sth Elephant Seal, Leopard Seal, and NZ Sea Lion.

Wrybill Tours: <https://wrybill-tours.com/>

Aurora Charters: <https://www.auroracharters.co.nz>

## Moeraki out to the Otago/Ōtākou Canyons

Pelagic trips here started out from Otago Harbour to the deeper waters of the Otago Canyons, and were organised by various people including Steve Wood and Peter Langlands after the success of Graeme Loh and Matthias Dehling in recording interesting sightings there from the University of Otago's research vessel MV *Polaris II*. Recently in July 2021, Oscar Thomas organised two consecutive single-day pelagic trips from Moeraki out some 40 km to the Otago Canyons with Ezifish Charters. These were so successful that another two consecutive day trips have now been scheduled in October. There are 20 places. Schedule: July and October currently.





■ Antipodean Albatross or Toroa.

Notable seabird species recorded at sea include two species of penguin (Little, Yellow-eyed), twelve species of albatross (Snowy, Antipodean/Gibson's, Southern Royal, Northern Royal, White-capped, Salvin's, Buller's, Black-browed, Campbell, Chatham, Grey-headed, Light-mantled Sooty), Southern and Northern Giant Petrel (incl white morph), Antarctic Fulmar, eight species of petrel (Cape, Cook's, Grey, Mottled, Blue, White-chinned, Westland, Antarctic), seven species of shearwater (Fluttering, Hutton's, Buller's, Sooty, Short-tailed, Subantarctic Little, Soft-plumaged), five species of prion (Fairy, Antarctic, Broad-billed, Salvin's, Thin-billed), four species of storm petrel (White-faced, Grey-backed, Black-bellied, Wilson's), Common Diving Petrel, four species of skua (Arctic, Long-tailed, Brown, South Polar), Black-billed Gull, five species of tern (Black-fronted, White-winged Black, Caspian, Antarctic, Common), Otago Shag, and Spotted Shag. Marine mammals recorded include Humpback Whale, Shepherd's Beaked Whale, Long-finned Pilot Whale, Southern Right Whale, Hector's Dolphin, Dusky Dolphin, and Southern Right Whale Dolphin.

Oscar Thomas: [oscarokoko@gmail.com](mailto:oscarokoko@gmail.com)

### Kaikoura out to the Kaikoura Canyon

Dennis Buurman started running pelagic seabird trips with Albatross Encounter in 1997. They run regular scheduled trips guided by Gary Melville as well as one-day charter trips on request. The location of the Kaikoura Canyon a few kilometres from land means the boat does not need to go out so far to see pelagic species such as albatrosses and giant petrels. This is the best place to see big flocks of Hutton's Shearwater. Schedule: year round.

Notable seabird species recorded include four species of penguin (Little, Yellow-eyed, Erect-crested, Chinstrap), thirteen species of albatross (Snowy, Antipodean/Gibson's, Northern Royal, Southern Royal, Black-browed, Campbell, White-capped, Salvin's, Chatham, Buller's, Atlantic Ocean Yellow-nosed, Indian Ocean Yellow-nosed, Light-mantled Sooty), Southern and Northern Giant Petrel, Antarctic Fulmar, ten species of petrel (Cook's, Grey-faced, Cape, Black, White-chinned, Westland, Grey, White-headed, Mottled, Soft-plumaged), seven species of shearwater (Buller's, Sooty, Hutton's, Fluttering, Short-tailed,

Flesh-footed, Pink-footed), four species of storm petrel (White-faced, Wilson's, Grey-backed, Black-bellied), Common Diving Petrel, Fairy Prion, Grey Phalarope, four species of skua (Arctic, Pomarine, Long-tailed, Brown), Black-billed Gull, Arctic Tern, and Black-fronted Tern. Marine mammal species recorded include Blue Whale, Humpback Whale, Southern Right Whale, Sperm Whale, Hector's Dolphin, Dusky Dolphin, and Southern Right Whale Dolphin.

Albatross Encounter: <https://www.albatrossencounter.co.nz/>

### Picton/Waitohi into Queen Charlotte Sounds/ Tōtaranui

These trips are run by E-ko Tours from Picton/Waitohi. Alternatively, drop-offs and pick-ups can be arranged to the outer islands with the Cougar Lines NZ water taxi service in Picton/Waitohi. This is not strictly speaking a 'pelagic' trip because it does not quite get you out into the open sea off the Sounds, but it does involve a 20+km boat trip each way to the outer Queen Charlotte Sounds to see the local specialty species, NZ King Shag/Kawau Pateketeke. It is also possible to visit one of the outer islands in the Sounds which have translocated populations of some interesting land bird species. Blumine/Oruawairua Island has translocated breeding Karaka Kakariki/Orange-fronted Parakeet, Mohua/Yellowhead, and Tieke/SI Saddleback. Motuara Island has translocated breeding Yellow-crowned Kakariki, Kakaruwai/SI Robin, and SI Tieke. King Shags breed and roost on White Rocks in the breeding season at the entrance to the Sounds. These large blue-eyed shags can sometimes be seen in flight or swimming in the outer Sounds area, or roosting on rocks at the southern end of Blumine Island, or sometimes on rocky headlands of the outer Sounds coast. Schedule: mainly warmer months.

Notable seabird species recorded here include Little Penguin, King Shag, Spotted Shag, Australasian Gannet, Fluttering Shearwater, Hutton's Shearwater, Arctic Skua, Caspian Tern, and White-fronted Tern. Marine mammals recorded include Dusky Dolphin, Bottlenose Dolphin, Hector's Dolphin, Common Dolphin, and NZ Fur Seal.

Contacts: [www.e-ko.nz](http://www.e-ko.nz) or [www.cougarline.co.nz](http://www.cougarline.co.nz)



▣ Grey Petrel or Kuia.

### Wellington out into Cook Strait/ Te Moana-o-Raukawa

The Wellington Branch of Birds New Zealand organises pelagic trips for members with Jonathan Delich of Cook Strait Charters, departing from Seaview Marina out to Nicholson Canyon in Cook Strait. The Regional Representative advertises the trips in advance to members in the region via email. There are 20 places. Schedule: year round.

Since 2016 notable species recorded include Little Penguin, nine species of albatross (Snowy, Antipodean/Gibson's, Southern Royal, Northern Royal, Tasmanian Shy, White-capped, Salvin's, Black-browed, Buller's), Southern and Northern Giant Petrel, seven species of petrel (Westland, White-chinned, Black, Grey-faced, Cook's, Cape, Soft-plumaged), five species of shearwater (Sooty, Buller's, Fluttering, Short-tailed, Flesh-footed), White-faced Storm Petrel, Common Diving Petrel, Spotted Shag, Arctic Skua, and Black-fronted Tern. Marine mammal sightings include Sperm Whale, Dusky Dolphin, Common Dolphin, and NZ Fur Seal.

Wellington Regional Representative Johannes Fischer:

[johannesfischer@live.nl](mailto:johannesfischer@live.nl)

Cook Strait Charters:

<https://www.cookstraitfishingcharters.co.nz/>

### East Cape/Gisborne out to the continental shelf

The first trips were organised off East Cape from Hick's Bay and Tolaga Bay by Brent Stephenson and Sav Saville of Wrybill Tours in the early 2000s. More recently Russell Cannings has started organising winter pelagic trips from Gisborne. Schedule: mainly the cooler months.

Notable seabird species recorded off East Cape include Little Penguin, nine species of albatross (Snowy, Northern Royal, Southern Royal, Antipodean/Gibson's, Salvin's, White-capped, Chatham, Black-browed, Campbell), Southern and Northern Giant Petrels, Antarctic Fulmar, seven species of petrel (Grey-faced, Black, Cook's, Pycroft's, Cape, Grey, White-naped), eight species of shearwater (Fluttering, Hutton's, Little, Flesh-footed, Buller's, Sooty, Short-tailed), two species of storm petrel (White-

faced, Wilson's), Common Diving Petrel, two species of prion (Fairy, Thin-billed), four species of skua (Arctic, Pomarine, Long-tailed, Brown), and Grey Phalarope.

Wrybill Tours: <https://wrybill-tours.com/>

Russell Cannings: [russellcannings79@gmail.com](mailto:russellcannings79@gmail.com)

### East Coromandel out to the Mercury Islands/Whakau

These trips off the East Coast of the Coromandel Peninsula first organised by Brent Stephenson and Sav Saville of Wrybill Tours out of Whitianga have now been discontinued but Russell Cannings recently started organising pelagic trips out to sea from nearby Whangamata. He also organises pelagic trips from Kawhia. Schedule: mainly warmer months.

Notable species recorded at sea in this area include Little Penguin, six species of albatross (Antipodean/Gibson's, White-capped, Salvin's, Buller's, Black-browed, Campbell), Northern Giant-Petrel, five species of petrel (Pycroft's, Cook's, Grey-faced, Black, White-naped), seven species of shearwater (Fluttering, Little, Flesh-footed, Buller's, Sooty, Short-tailed, Wedge-tailed), two species of storm petrel (New Zealand, White-faced), two species of prion (Fairy, Thin-billed), Common Diving Petrel, Australasian Gannet, Arctic Skua, and Grey Ternlet. Recent land-based seawatching in the Whangamata area has produced records of Grey-headed and Light-mantled Sooty albatross, Mottled, White-headed, and Soft-plumaged petrel, and Brown and Pomarine skua.

Russell Cannings: [russellcannings79@gmail.com](mailto:russellcannings79@gmail.com)

### Sandspit to the Mokohinau Islands/Hauraki Gulf

Since the early 2000s Brent Stephenson and Sav Saville of Wrybill Tours have been running trips that depart from Sandspit near Warkworth and go out past Hauturu-o-Toi/Little Battier Island towards the Mokohinau Islands. They also have a Marsden Cove trip out past the Hen & Chickens Islands. Schedule: mainly warmer months.

Notable species recorded on the Sandspit trips include Little Penguin, five species of albatross (Antipodean/Gibson's, White-





Antarctic Fulmar.

capped, Salvin's, Black-browed, Buller's), Northern Giant Petrel, nine species of petrel (Black, Cook's, Pycroft's, Grey-faced, Mottled, Grey, Black-winged, White-naped, Providence), seven species of shearwater (Fluttering, Buller's, Flesh-footed, Little, Short-tailed, Sooty, Great), three species of storm petrel (NZ, White-faced, Wilson's), Common Diving Petrel, Fairy Prion, two species of skua (Arctic, Pomarine), and Grey Ternlet. Marine mammal species recorded include Long-finned Pilot Whale, Bottlenose Dolphin, Bryde's Whale, Minke Whale, Pseudorca, and Orca.

Wrybill Tours: <https://wrybill-tours.com/>

Email: [info@wrybill-tours.com](mailto:info@wrybill-tours.com)

### Tutukaka past the Poor Knights Islands/ Tawhiti Rahi to 'The Petrel Station'

These trips were started by Scott Brooks in 2017. They depart from Tutukaka and head out to the Poor Knights Islands to see Grey Ternlets at the Sugarloaf and Buller's Shearwaters in large rafts off the main islands, and then further out to the continental shelf some 40 km offshore to a location Scott has dubbed 'The Petrel Station'. Over the course of 25 of these trips a total of 42 tubenose species have been recorded. Schedule: year round.

Notable sightings at sea have included Little Penguin, ten species of albatross (Snowy, Antipodean/Gibson's, Northern Royal, White-capped, Black-browed, Campbell, Salvin's, Chatham, Buller's, Light-mantled Sooty), Southern and Northern Giant Petrel, ten species of petrel (Blue, Black, Cook's, Pycroft's, Grey-faced, White-naped, Black-winged, White-headed, Soft-plumaged, Mottled), eight species of shearwater (Buller's, Fluttering, Flesh-footed, Wedge-tailed, Pink-footed, Sooty, Short-tailed, Little), four species of prion (Fairy, Broad-billed, Thin-billed, Antarctic), five species of storm petrel (NZ, White-faced, Wilson's, Grey-backed, Black-bellied), Common Diving Petrel, Australasian Gannet, four species of skua (Brown, South Polar, Arctic, Pomarine), Grey Ternlet, and Arctic Tern. Marine mammal species recorded include Common and Bottlenose dolphin, Minke Whale, and NZ Fur Seal.

Scott Brooks: [scott@ourspot.nz](mailto:scott@ourspot.nz)

### Whangaroa to the continental shelf

These trips were organised by Detlef Davies when he was Birds New Zealand's Far North Regional Representative 2006-2014. The boat left Whangaroa Harbour, passing Stephenson Island where Cape Barren Geese were often seen, and out to the continental shelf edge some 40 km offshore. Schedule: mainly warmer months.

Notable sightings at sea include Little Penguin, seven species of albatross (Antipodean/Gibson's, Northern Royal, Black-browed, Campbell, Buller's, White-capped, Salvin's), Southern and Northern Giant Petrel (incl white morph), nine species of petrel (Black, White-naped, Kermadec, Black-winged, Cook's, Pycroft's, Grey-faced, Cape, Gould's), eight species of shearwater (Buller's, Flesh-footed, Fluttering, Hutton's, Sooty, Little, Short-tailed, Wedge-tailed), three species of storm petrel (NZ, Wilson's, White-faced), Common Diving Petrel, Fairy Prion, three species of skua (Arctic, Brown, South Polar), and Grey Ternlet.

Copies of Detlef Davies' 2011 site guide book *Where to find birds in Far North New Zealand* can be ordered from Cynthia Matthews: [cynth1bubble@gmail.com](mailto:cynth1bubble@gmail.com)

Michael Szabo is editor of *Birds New Zealand* magazine. You can see more of Mike Ashbee's bird photography here: [www.mikeashbeephoto.com/](http://www.mikeashbeephoto.com/)



Blue Petrel photo by OscarThomas.



▲ Sea-watchers at Whiritoa, Coromandel: Michael Szabo

## 89% of Atlas grid squares have data

Participation in the NZ Bird Atlas continues to increase, along with a continual increase in the number of checklists being submitted. By August, some 16,500 checklists had been submitted for winter 2021 and we are on target to eclipse the 17,000 checklists submitted in winter 2020. For the winter season cumulatively, more than 45,000 checklists have been submitted covering 2,200 (68%) of grid squares.

For the Atlas as a whole, we have now had almost 1,000 people submit 160,000 checklists to more than 89% of all grid squares. We are also constantly impressed with the quality of the data being submitted (complete checklists with counts or estimates for all species and checklists of high spatial and temporal resolution) – well done everyone and please keep up the amazing work!

It was great to be able to present an update on the Atlas project at the Birds New Zealand conference in Thames and to put many faces to names that we see frequently submitting Atlas checklists. We remained busy all weekend recruiting new Atlasers, showing people the range of tools available to help, and solving a few problems some people had encountered. A small number of dedicated Atlasers also braved a wet day after the conference to do some Coromandel atlasing, and 17 people headed to Rotorua for a five-day post-conference Atlasing trip. Rotorua was selected as we knew there was a limited amount of winter effort in the surrounding area, and it was not too far from Thames.

We split off into pairs or groups, changing where we surveyed and who we surveyed with each day to swap Atlas ideas and tips. For the Atlas team, it was a great opportunity to spend time with some of the wider Atlas community and share that buzz that people get when they are Atlasing. We also discovered some cool new areas that we probably never would have visited otherwise. We also put in some nocturnal effort, picking up Ruru/Morepork in a good number of habitats/squares.

The Waikato and Bay of Plenty regions received a much needed boost for winter, with over 1,300 checklists submitted collectively by the team to more than 100 grid squares, noting over 70 species. Everyone put in a huge amount of effort and we cannot thank them enough. Everyone also had a great time and the feedback was that we shouldn't wait until the 2022 conference to organise another trip. So, if you have an area in mind that requires effort and would like some assistance organising a trip there please get in touch with us. We continue to run Atlas challenges and are seeing increased participation as a result. We have secured some amazing prizes so will now increase the challenge frequency to monthly. Check the "New Zealand Bird Atlas" Facebook page, or the Atlas portal for posts and articles on the monthly challenges.

NEW ZEALAND BIRD ATLAS TEAM (MIKE, PAT, DAN AND SAM)



▲ NZ Tomtit/Ngirungiru in the snow: Mike Ashbee.

## Merlin app sound ID

Last year we helped develop the NZ pack for the freely-available Merlin Bird ID app, which is increasingly popular with eBird users as the two apps work well with each other. The Merlin app is now being developed further to incorporate sound ID where the app listens to the birds around you and shows real-time suggestions for what species are singing or calling. We are currently working with Cornell to develop the NZ bird sound ID pack. The sound ID tool uses recordings from the Macaulay Library that have been uploaded as part of people's eBird checklists. However, for Merlin to learn which calls relate to what bird, we need a minimum of 100 recordings of each species.

If you want to help, please consider recording and uploading audio files as part of your Atlas checklists. Recordings of any species (native or introduced) are needed but here is a list of priority species: Pied Stilt; Paradise Shelduck; Pukeko; Morepork; South and North island Robin; Kaka; Tomtit; Fantail; Grey Warbler; Whitehead; Brown Creeper; Rifleman; Pipit; Fernbird; Welcome Swallow; Eastern Rosella. If you have good quality audio recordings of any NZ birds please consider uploading them to eBird. They can either be uploaded to existing checklists or as a new incidental or historic checklist. The only additional data you will need for this is a date, time, and location.

## Vulnerability of NZ's 'deep endemic' forest birds

A new study has revealed why New Zealand's 'deep endemic' forest bird species, such as Kiwi and Kokako that evolved here the longest, are more vulnerable to decline from deforestation and predation than species with ancestors that arrived more recently, such as Grey Warbler and Silvereye.

Published in the *NZ Journal of Ecology* in July, authors Susan Walker, Adrian Monks and John Innes from Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research compared data from Birds New Zealand's two previous NZ Bird Atlas projects (1985 & 2007). They used data on species' distributions relative to geographical gradients and species' traits to find that three life-history traits (hole nesting, large body size, and limited ability to travel widely across land) account for the greater vulnerability of deep endemic forest species to deforestation and predation.

This led them to three predictions about a future with fewer predators. Firstly, that forest scarcity will limit the population recovery of some, but not all, forest birds. It may be difficult to restore larger, less-mobile endemic species such as Kokako, and breeding populations of mobile cavity-nesting species such as Kaka, to deforested landscapes. Secondly, that restoration is likely to be more successful in large tracts of forest, but not all large forest tracts are equal. Cooler forests are not the best environments for larger-bodied species that require more food to maintain sizeable populations and are less capable of travelling to obtain it. And thirdly, that there will be changes in the structure of the bird community, rather than increases in all species.





## Notornis, Student & People's Awards

Society President Bruce McKinlay and Councillor Colin Miskelly presented these awards at the Thames conference:

1. **Jacques de Satge** - Conference Student Talk Award for best oral presentation by a student: Understanding mangrove-avifauna relations in Aotearoa: using cameras to quantify Banded Rail habitat use
2. **Annie West** - Conference Student Poster Award for best poster by a student: Gut microbiome of the threatened Takahē: Biogeographic patterns and conservation implications.
3. **Sara Coutinho** - Conference People's Poster Choice Award for best poster chosen by people at the conference: Can audio recorders replace traditional bird monitoring methods for bird richness estimates?
4. **Rebecca French** - Notornis Award for best 2020 Notornis student paper: Birds of Enderby Island, Auckland Islands, New Zealand subantarctic.

## NI Brown Kiwi vocal behaviour

Reliable estimates of North Island Brown Kiwi (NIBK) abundance and population densities are very important in conservation as they allow decision-makers to better manage available resources. Monitoring NIBK must be non-invasive, standardised, and scalable.

This project will work with Kiwitrack Ltd to develop miniature recorders embedded in the birds' radio transmitter to investigate the individual vocal behaviour of NIBK. We will equip a representative number of birds with these custom transmitters and concurrently deploy environmental acoustic recording units in the areas where the birds live to record individual and community level vocalisations simultaneously. We will analyse all recordings using AviaNZ (<https://avianz.net>) to investigate how vocal activities may vary in different contexts in order to provide insight into NIBK vocal behaviour. This will provide crucial information for the interpretation of acoustic surveys. Finally, I am very grateful to Birds New Zealand for supporting my research with the 2021 David Medway Scholarship.

ALBERTO DE ROSA

## Donations and bequests

Birds New Zealand is working hard to ensure a better future for our birds, but to do so we need your help. Birds New Zealand is a registered charity (CC 41020) which means tax credits are available for donations made in New Zealand. You can donate to Birds New Zealand in the following ways:

\* Deposit funds into our bank account: 02-0290-0164715-00

\* Make a credit card payment online: [www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/you-can-help/make-a-donation/#/form/Donation](http://www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/you-can-help/make-a-donation/#/form/Donation)

## Leaving a gift in your will

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

It is important to consult your solicitor, Guardian Trust, or Public Trust office for advice on drawing up your will. A general gift allows Birds New Zealand to direct funds where they are needed, but we are also very happy to discuss options if you would like to leave a gift in your will for a specific purpose. There are two options for supporting Birds New Zealand in your will:

\* *Specific Legacy*: You may wish to leave a specific amount of money, shares, bonds, items, or a nominated gift to Birds New Zealand, or

\* *Residual Legacy*: You may wish to leave a gift of all or part of your net estate (what remains after all taxes, specific gifts to family and friends, and the cost of administering the estate have been paid).

This type of legacy should be expressed as a percentage or share of your estate.

## Evaluating Pāteke reintroduction success

A new study evaluating the success of the reintroduction of Pāteke/Brown Teal to lake and forest habitats in a predator-controlled site in NZ by Katie Sheridan and John Waldman (Professor of Biology, Queens College, New York) has been published in *Ecological Management and Restoration* (October 2020).

They evaluated home range attributes, and roosting and foraging patterns of Pāteke within Zealandia Ecosanctuary in Wellington with the goal of assessing suitability of forested, predator-controlled sites as future Pāteke release sites, a habitat type currently considered as unsuitable to the species, or of marginal quality.

They found that forested habitats provide suitable release sites for Pāteke provided the following conditions are met: predator control must be ongoing; a flock site must be available; supplemental feeders should be available temporarily upon release; and the site must be large enough to accommodate at least 50 pairs of Pāteke.

These findings show that appropriate habitat composition within release sites remains an important consideration and that future releases should take into account the extent to which founder birds are inbred as this could be the driving factor in differences in overall fitness, impartial to habitat.

The study also confirmed that Pāteke retain the behavioural and physiological plasticity to successfully inhabit forested habitat. However, they state that further studies comparing breeding success, age and weight of Pāteke in open water settings vs forest settings are desirable to further confirm forest habitat suitability, particularly in forests with unknown habitat quality.



■ The Northland Branch visited the wetland boardwalk at Old Mill Rd, Ngunguru. Photo: Ilse Corkery.



■ This breeding plumage Hudsonian Godwit was at Ambury Park in May. Photo: Ron Chew.

### FAR NORTH

Our 2 patrols along 30 kilometres of 90 Mile Beach in May and June recorded 600 birds and 843 birds respectively. Red-billed Gulls outnumbered Sth Black-backed Gulls in June and there were over 200 SIPO. We were also pleased to see more than the usual number of Banded Dotterels (8+7) and NZ Dotterels (10+3). In July, Kevin Matthews reported seeing 18 Banded Dotterels on the northern part of the beach, as well as 7 Cattle Egrets and many hundreds of Royal Spoonbills at Unahi. The spoonbills are difficult to count now as they roost in paddocks rather than the *Macrocarpa* by the road.

On 18/6, 18 Red-crowned Kakariki were released by volunteers on Urapukapuka. Due to bad weather, this was one of the hardest translocations organised by Project Island Song. The tremendous work by the team on Hauturu-o-Toi/Little Barrier Island meant the translocation was a success and the birds could be transported by helicopter. It was great to see these birds released into their new home.

– ISABELLA GODBERT & DARREN MARKIN

### NORTHLAND

The Grey-faced Petrels at Taurawhata have already started returning to mate and clear burrows in preparation for the next breeding season. 24 active burrows were counted in mid-May, the highest early season number to date. At the May meeting Dai Morgan gave a very interesting presentation on the Australian Magpie in New Zealand.

In June, John Craig and Anne Stewart gave a fascinating talk on their restoration efforts and the successes they've had with increasing birdlife at their property at Patau North. After 15 years, more than 350,000 native trees have been planted and 14 wetlands restored, providing a home for 70 bird species, 23 of which are rare or endangered. John is also working on a Bio Value Index attached to Carbon Credits. This tool more accurately reflects the true carbon dollar value of well-functioning native biodiverse environments. The system highlights that over time, native biodiverse environments are superior carbon sinks when compared to the monoculture of exotic pines being planted, cut down, carbon released, then exotic pine planted again.

At our July meeting, Scott Brooks gave a beautiful slideshow on the pelagic trips he

organises from Tutukaka out past the Poor Knights Islands to 'The Petrel Station'. The July trip recorded a Pink-footed Shearwater, a Grey-backed Storm Petrel and a Brown Skua among many others. Planning is afoot now for a pelagic 'field trip' by our branch!

In late July a group of 12 of us had a great morning birding in Ngunguru at the Old Mill Lane wetland boardwalk, with fantastic close views of Fernbirds. It was also great for our Northland branch to meet Melanie Miller and Tom Batchelor from the Far North branch. We finished up the morning's birding with a lovely morning tea at Hilton and Melva Ward's house nearby.

– ILSE CORKERY

### AUCKLAND

Our autumn Michael Taylor Memorial Guided Walk in Cornwall Park on 30/5 recorded 21 species including 6 Helmeted Guineafowl, 8 Kereru, and 24 Tui. Our Ambury Park Guided Walk on 13/6 was attended by 35 members of the public with sightings including 450 Bar-tailed Godwit, 800 Wrybill, 7 Nth NZ Dotterel, 1 Banded Dotterel, and 180 Royal Spoonbill.

Two shorebird winter censuses took place in June. The Mangawhai Harbour Census had 10 observers with birds seen including 198 Nth NZ Dotterel, 100 Banded Dotterel, 7 Wrybill, 2 NZ Fairy Tern, 2 NZ Dabchick and 1 Australasian Bittern. A total of 25 observers took part in the South Kaipara Census on 26/6 which recorded 9,074 SIPO, 1,776 Bar-tailed Godwit, 21 Ruddy Turnstone, 35 Red Knot, 161 Wrybill, 1 Sanderling, 101 Northern NZ Dotterel, 785 Banded Dotterel, 19 NZ Fairy Tern, 1 Eastern Little Tern and 212 Royal Spoonbill.

In June and July, we experienced a few storm events but the numbers of beach-wrecked birds found was lower than expected. Our Pakiri Beach Patrol on 12/6 found just 4 Grey-faced Petrels, 1 Common Diving Petrel, and 1 Pied Shag. Muriwai Beach Patrols also had low numbers with 5 birds on 19/6 including 1 White-capped Albatross and 1 Nth Giant Petrel. Just 4 birds were found on 3/7 with singletons of Buller's Albatross, Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, Hutton's Shearwater and Common Diving Petrel. A beach patrol by Graham Lowther of south Muriwai Beach on 16/5 found a lone Antarctic Fulmar.

A notable invasive bird species sighting was that of 3 Rose-ringed Parakeets

prospecting for a nest hole in Pt Chevalier reported by Haydon Pickford on 19/6. MPI have been advised. Rare bird sightings in the Auckland region included a Hudsonian Godwit at Ambury Park on 29/5, and a Terek Sandpiper was seen by Harry Boorman at Big Sand Island in Kaipara Harbour on 7/8. An exhausted White-headed Petrel found on Muriwai Beach on 20/7 was taken into care at BirdCare Aotearoa. Fortunately, it was able to recover and has since been released.

– IAN McLEAN

### SOUTH AUCKLAND

Our region enjoyed hosting the annual conference in Thames on Queen's Birthday weekend, and our winter atlas effort got off to a great start with many delegates submitting a large number of checklists during and after conference. Our May speaker Jacques de Satge gave a presentation on his study of how Banded Rails use the mangroves at Mangawhai Harbour. In July Tim Lovegrove spoke about the successful translocation of a Red-billed Gull colony at Wynyard Point in 2019.

Up to 300 White-fronted Terns were seen at Hamilton's Gap, Awhitu, in May/June and 2,000 at Kopu, Coromandel. On 19/6 David Lawrie and Tony Habraken saw 11 Banded Dotterel and 11 NZ Dotterel at Port Waikato. Two of the latter species had flags from Whatipu, and one Banded Dotterel had a flag from Kaikoura – the 3rd season it has been seen at the Port.

In July, Phil Hammond reported 50 Cattle Egrets near Rangiriri and 21 at Piako. During June/July many visitors to Miranda were treated to the sight of an Australasian Bittern hiding in plain sight between the main road and the stilt pond.

At our July meeting we discussed the presence of NZ Scaup in our region and agreed that sightings of this species are on the increase. Relatively mild weather seems to have encouraged early breeding in some species. Mallard ducklings were seen in Wattle Downs in mid-June, and a new Blackbird nest with 3 eggs (abandoned) was found in mid-July. Black Swans are now nesting with several pairs seen with young in various locations.

Our May beach patrol at Karioitahi found 3 Fairy Prion, 2 Hutton's Shearwater, and 1 each of Australian Magpie, Sooty Shearwater, and





## REGIONAL ROUNDUP

Salvin's Prion. The June patrol found a White-headed Petrel, a diving petrel, 1 Hutton's and 1 Fluttering shearwater, 1 Little Penguin, and 2 Red-billed Gulls.

– SUE FROSTICK

### WAIKATO

Our July meeting speaker Jeanette Brooker gave an interesting talk about the amazing bird diversity around the confluence of the two Niles in Sudan. Russell Cannings reported sightings including a possible drake Northern Shoveller at Lake Hakanoa and a White Heron near Huntly. It was also good to hear that up to 50 Cattle Egrets are present in the Rangiriri area. Winter harbour censuses have been completed in the west and east of the Waikato with no surprises other than that the Royal Spoonbills on the eastern side between Whangamata and Opoutere seem slowly to be increasing in numbers.

– KEN WEDGWOOD

### TARANAKI

Our June field trip to Barrett Lagoon recorded 31 species including 2 NZ Dabchicks, 28 Coots, and 1 Pied Shag in a pine tree where a pair had bred successfully. Up the road at Ratapihipihi flowering Kohekohe and Puriri attracted 25 Tui. At our July meeting Rob Wheeler announced his intention to resurrect the Taranaki beach patrol scheme, once ably carried out by the late David Medway. In his atlas update Steve Purdon reported the most frequently recorded species are Swamp Harrier, NZ Fantail, Australian Magpie, and Blackbird.

Our next field trip was to Sandy Bay in South Taranaki. VOCs breed there but there were no NZ Dotterels this time. A flock of 75 Banded Dotterel, 44 SIPO, and 85 Red-billed Gull kept flying between a paddock behind the sand dunes and the beach. There were 8 VOCs on the beach plus 2 Caspian Tern and 1 banded Red-billed Gull among the flock. Our most unusual record was a pair of Cattle Egret out on the rocks there with a White-faced Heron. We have been there previously but the number of SIPO and Banded Dotterel appear to have increased.

Barry Hartley recorded 10 Pied Shag at Awakino and 11 Royal Spoonbill at Mokau. We keep hoping they will breed there sometime. Further south at Tongaporutu there were 31 SIPOs and 17 VOCs. The McGill's at home have a late/early breeding Blackbird with 3 offspring. The 5 well-coloured NZ Dotterel at Waiongana appear to have moved on, perhaps somewhere with better weather for breeding, maybe.

– PETER FRYER

### HAWKE'S BAY

At the end of June and in early July branch members completed the winter wader census for our region. Participants were impressed by the numbers of NZ Dotterels/Tūturiwhatu, Wrybills/Ngutuparore, and VOCs/Tōrea Pango seen at Pōrangahau. We also had a field trip in mid-July that aimed to provide data for some empty Atlas grid squares. This trip saw 3 carloads of observers head off in different directions to submit checklists in 3 grid squares that previously hadn't had any winter counts done.

In the past couple of months, a NZ Falcon/

Kārearea has been spotted several times in the Frimley Park area of Hastings, and Havelock North. Three Kārearea were also seen in June at Blowhard Bush. Six Pied Shags/Kāruhiruhi were observed at the Tukituki River in May, and up to 4 Spotted Shags/Parekareka were seen around Clive from the end of July. Variable numbers of Black-fronted Terns/Tarapirohe have been detected at Haumoana and the Tukituki Rivermouth, with the biggest flock of 160 individuals recorded on 22/6. Seven juveniles were counted as part of a smaller flock of 34. One of our members has noted a relative absence of Silvereyes/Tauhou this winter, and we wonder if other regions have noticed the same phenomenon?

– THALIA SACHTLEBEN

### WHANGANUI

Jim Norris continues to keep an eye on the Nankeen Night Herons that live behind the Behind-the-Door-on-4 Café at Upokongaro. We have had various reports of birds seen foraging during daylight on the banks of the Makirikiri Stream, adjacent to where the birds roost in winter. Perhaps not coincidentally, these observations were made when the Whanganui River and the Makirikiri Stream were silt-laden, perhaps limiting the birds' ability to forage successfully at night, which seems to be their normal habit. Currently, there appear to be 4 birds on site: 2 adults, a 3-year-old subadult—similar to an adult except for a few spotted greater coverts—and perhaps a juvenile, although that has not been seen for some time.

The Pied Shag continues its expansion westwards along the southern North Island coast. Apart from breeding at Pūtiki (up to 3 pairs bred 3 times during the past year), the species is established on the Waitōtara River estuary. Black-fronted Dotterel is another species currently expanding its range. For at least the last decade, it has been recorded frequently on Koitiata Lagoon at the mouth of the Turakina River, but now it is regular on the Whangaehu River estuary. Seven individuals were seen inland along Whangaehu Beach Road in mid-July, happily using pools next to roadside silage store. Other recent notable sightings include 2 Cattle Egrets at the same farm on the Whangaehu Beach Road to which the species has been coming, apparently every year, since at least 1984, Spotless Crake and Fernbird at a known-site inland from Whanganui, and Kākā at Virginia Lake.

– PETER FROST

### MANAWATU

The winter has been predictably quiet in the Manawatū, livened up by white birds. The perennial Little Egret at the Manawatū Estuary has been residing by the viewing platform, often with Royal Spoonbills nearby, and a White Heron has also been seen nearby with 4 Cattle Egrets further upriver. Inland records of a Pied Shag and a White Heron on the Manawatū River at Palmerston North were both unexpected. A recent record of up to 300 pale birds flying by the Tararua Range by the Pahiatua track was probably of Black-billed Gulls, which have bred successfully in recent years near Ashhurst. NZ Falcons have been frequently seen around Palmerston North, including a banded bird

that was a chick from the local golf course. Atlasing trips have continued to target specific squares, at least when the weather permitted it. These trips have increased our awareness of local oxidation ponds, with good records of Black-fronted Dotterels, NZ Dabchicks and Australasian Shovelers at some of them. Meetings have included a lavishly-illustrated two-part talk by Murray Potter on NZ's Subantarctic (and Chatham) islands.

– PHIL BATTLE

### WELLINGTON

The great news for Wellington is that Johannes Fischer is the new Regional Representative. Johannes will be well-known to Birds New Zealand members for his work on the Whenua Hou Diving Petrel (a.k.a. the Flying Penguin) which has been presented at the Annual Conference and published in *Notornis*. For the August Wellington meeting Johannes gave a summary of his findings on this critically endangered species while Alan Tennyson presented findings on the genetics of the Whenua Hou Diving Petrel and related diving petrels.

The weather for our Cook Strait pelagic trip in July was benign with light winds and relatively smooth seas. The number of birds and species seen at Nicholson Canyon was less than normal, most likely reflecting better feeding prospects for seabirds where 4 Hoki trawlers were operating further out at Cook Canyon. However, we did observe 6 species of albatross: Northern Royal, Southern Royal, Buller's, White-capped, Salvin's, and Black-browed. A notable absence was Westland Petrel which is regularly present in Cook Strait.

August marks the last of the monthly counts of the current Wellington Harbour survey. The survey started in 2018 and was planned to run monthly for two years. Unfortunately, Covid-19 prevented the counts being carried out in April 2020 and an August count was cancelled due to bad weather. The missed monthly counts are being carried out this year. The first Wellington Harbour survey was conducted in 1975-77 and subsequent surveys have been carried out every ten years. The same methodology has been used for each survey and consequently is providing valuable longitudinal information on the trends of birds in the harbour.

– GEOFF DE LISLE

### MARLBOROUGH

Patrick Crowe reports that wet weather and flooding prevented the Atlas team from pushing into remote grid squares with many areas like the North Bank of the Wairau and the Awatere Valley cut-off completely, but they continue to Atlas wherever they can. Three Australasian Crested Grebes and 5 NZ Dabchicks were seen on a vineyard lake up the Waihopai Valley. The resident Taylor Dam and Lake Elterwater NZ Dabchicks have been successful breeders over the past few seasons and these may be evidence of the birds expanding their range in the Marlborough region. The Banded Rail at Shakespeare Bay continues to be seen with as many as 5 individuals observed at once. Two Kōtuku were seen together on the Ōpaoa River by Phil Bradfield.



■ This Antarctic Petrel was seen at Birdlings Flat during a storm: Andrew Crossland

Dan Burgin also reports that there have been quite a few little groups of Brown Creeper along the Blairich Valley track, and that Hoary-headed Grebe are still present at Lake Elterwater. At Lake Grassmere, 58 Banded Dotterel were recently seen, as well as Bar-tailed Godwit at Wairau lagoons, and Cattle Egret along Oporuri Road.

— KRISTIN RUWHIŪ

### NELSON

Avian seasonal changes become apparent in July. Blackbirds gathered nesting material, Spur-winged Plover pairs chose breeding territories in paddocks, and estuaries were emptying of the winter flocks moving further south to breeding areas. Sacred Kingfishers were still noticeable around the estuaries, before some move inland to breed, and Cirl Buntings were reported from coastal and inland areas.

Our branch recently changed to a bigger meeting venue to accommodate an increase in attendees, which has a big screen and plenty of seats. Recent presentations included an evening on Moults, Rare and Difficult to find Birds in the Australian Outback, and a book-swap. We also welcomed Paul Griffith as our new Regional Representative, taking over at the helm from Gail.

Wader census co-ordinator Rob Schuckard reported: "The OSNZ winter shorebird census happened between 23 and 27 July 2021. Golden Bay had about 3,753 shorebirds, Tasman Bay 3,808, and Farewell Spit 7,224. Of the 15,000 birds counted, 75% were endemic shorebirds. SIPO at Farewell Spit reached an all-time low. Such may reflect the later timing for the survey where a portion of the birds have already moved south. Such very low numbers were not repeated in Tasman Bay and Golden Bay. Where SIPO were low at Farewell Spit, Bar-tailed Godwit reached (with 2,626 birds) the highest number recorded since 1996. Also, Wrybill showed high numbers, again a reflection of southward migration. These numbers were recorded from Motueka Sandspit and Shellbank in Waimea Estuary."

Increasing numbers of NZ Scaup in Golden and Tasman bays attracted the attention of members, especially on the Wakapuaka Oxidation Ponds and associated wetlands where flocks of several hundred can now be seen compared to 'a few' 30 years ago. Australian Coot are being noted more often on various ponds. A NZ Dotterel was counted on Farewell Spit and two on Motueka Sandspit in July, and an individual Black-fronted Dotterel was seen in Appleby on 11/8. We now await with eager anticipation the return of the Arctic waders and Shining Cuckoos.

— GAIL D. QUAYLE

### CANTERBURY

A range of interesting seabird sightings come from the last days of May, as birds were pushed in close to shore during a large southerly storm event. Some keen local birders braved the weather to do some sea-watching and were rewarded with a good range of seabirds. Off Birdlings Flat, the variety of seabirds included a Grey-headed Albatross, a Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, and a Black-bellied and a White-bellied Storm Petrel. There were also up to 100 Soft-plumaged Petrels, 3 White-headed Petrels, and an Antarctic Petrel. Interesting seabirds were also seen elsewhere, with a Soft-plumaged Petrel and Northern Giant Petrel being spotted off Spencer Park Beach, and an Antarctic Prion off New Brighton Beach.

Along with up to 7 Cattle Egrets on farmland around Lower Lake Road and Johnstons Road, near Lake Ellesmere, a Glossy Ibis was also spotted in late May. It appeared to have just been passing through, as after being seen the 21/5 and 22/5, it was not reported again, despite the best efforts of local members to relocate it.

The annual winter wader count in June had an excellent turnout of over 20 volunteers, despite foggy conditions which made viewing a challenge. Among the waders seen at Lake Ellesmere were a single Wrybill and a Red-necked Stint, and over 800 Banded Dotterel. A Marsh Crane was picked up at Boggy Creek, and 93 Australasian Crested Grebes were seen by the Christchurch City Council ranger team at Lake Forsyth. The following month, some members participated in the Ashburton Lakes Count. Just under 2,500 NZ Scaup were counted, the most abundant species by far. Plenty of other waterfowl were also seen, including 8 Australasian Crested Grebes. Finally, after 3 months without a Regional Representative, Canterbury is pleased to welcome Donald Goodale to the role.

### OTAGO

For the second time this year I start with sad news, acknowledging the passing of long-time Birds New Zealand Otago member Frank Austin. Frank was involved for over 40 years, taking part in early Hoiho surveys on Otago Peninsula, and then during the 1990s he invited members to band hundreds of Silvereyes in his garden, something I remember well from my first years with OSNZ as a school student.

Successful winter Atlas field trips visited several new squares around Macrears and Hindon with the highlight of one being a Black Shag colony in Waipori Gorge. Part way through the second winter, 60.92% of Otago squares now have some winter coverage, with 96 species recorded to date.

Interesting bird sightings have included a Pied Shag at Diamond Lake and 5 at Catlins River, and a juvenile Otago Shag at Kaitangata Primary School. Eleven Sulphur Crested Cockatoos, a Cattle Egret, a Reef Heron, and an Antarctic Fulmar were recorded from the Catlins. Marsh Crakes and good numbers of NZ Scaup were back at Tomahawk Lagoon, and the first Fernbird was recorded this winter.

A healthy Erect-crested Penguin was at Taieri Mouth and Cirl Buntings were seen at Katiki Point. Song Thrushes were in large flocks (132 + 320) in Central Otago. Our newsletter reported successful breeding seasons for both Australasian Crested Grebes at Wanaka and Titī/Sooty Shearwater in remnant colonies around Dunedin. Near Queenstown 2 Kea were found as roadkill on the same day.

Fourteen Otago members attended the Thames Conference. The winter wader count was on a foggy day on 20/6 with the main species (Bar-tailed Godwit, VOC, SIPO, Pied Stilt) recorded in comparable numbers to the previous two years. The highlight was a Reef Heron at Warrington. Thanks to Maree Johnstone for coordinating the count. The first colour-flagged SIPO was seen by Nick Beckwith on 7/7 at Warrington, a bird that was banded in Waimea Estuary, Nelson.

Pelagic seabird watching trips have produced species rich lists, both from trips out of Moeraki to the Otago Canyons organised by Oscar Thomas, and from the University of Otago research vessel MV Polaris II. The huge power lines that cross Otago Harbour mid-way are being put underwater. Thanks Aurora! Upcoming events include a Dunedin Botanic Gardens guided bird walk on 12/9 and 2 Moeraki pelagic trips organised by Oscar Thomas on 16+17/10.

— FRANCESA CUNNINGHAME

### SOUTHLAND

Our Winter wader count was completed successfully on 4/7 with good counts from all our usual locations apart from Jock's Roost where there was an access issue, so only Bar-tailed Godwits could be seen from our vantage point. Our resident Terek Sandpiper is still present at the head of Awarua Bay. A surprise bird for the wader count was an Antarctic Tern seen among a flock of Black-fronted Tern also at the head of the bay, and a first for this area.

One of Southland's iconic species is the southern NZ Dotterel, whose numbers have fluctuated over the years. Our branch was asked to assist DOC at short-notice with a count at several locations around Awarua Bay because there were concerns the population may have dropped markedly in recent months. We managed to find small flocks at 3 of 4 locations, and at time of writing we are waiting for the counts from Stewart Island to get some idea of the total population. Anyone who has had interactions with this species will know how easy it is to approach these birds and just how inquisitive they are. It would be a disaster if we were to lose this species.

Other news and sightings from around the region included 4 Cattle Egrets on 16/5 south of the Totara Forest in western Southland, and a flock of 10 reported from the Waituna area on 3/8. A lone NZ Falcon was seen on a power pole near Lumsden on 22/5 during our Atlas counts, and another was reported from Queens Park in Invercargill on 1/7. Finally, an Antarctic Fulmar was picked up from an Invercargill suburban garden by a DOC officer in very good condition and released on 25/7 at Bluff.

— PHIL RHODES





Frank Austin photo by John Darby.

## In memory of Frank Austin

It is with sadness that we acknowledge the death of long-time Birds New Zealand member Frank Austin who was an active member for over 40 years and one of the first people to be involved in studying Hoiho on Otago Peninsula.

"Frank was a quite wonderful companion to have in the field," recalls John Darby. "The first time that Frank accompanied me in the field was during the Yellow-eyed Penguin (YEP) breeding season of 1983. ... Papanui Beach and Fuchsia Gully were the areas that we worked together, but we moved to wider fields by 1986 and Frank gathered a great deal of the breeding records from Okia Reserve (Victory Beach) from then onwards well into the late 1990s. I don't believe he missed a single census event every October and December through to 1998. At the end of each day's work, we would sit on a high spot and compare notes. He was a most companionable person to be with, a great listener, and always very encouraging and someone who I respected enormously for his gentleness and patience. As recently as 2008 he was still actively interested in the welfare of YEPs."

Others will recall days spent camping on Motuara Sanctuary Island to look after the new translocations there, and the banding of hundreds of Silvereyes that Frank did at his place on Highgate.

MARY THOMPSON, OTAGO REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

## Quantifying Whenua Hou Diving Petrel recruitment

I was granted funds by the 2020 Birds New Zealand Research Fund to better understand the population dynamics of the critically endangered Whenua Hou Diving Petrel/Kuaka and improve projections and identification of adequate management alternatives.

This included capturing ~52% of the Kuaka world population (103 adults). More importantly, we captured several banded chicks, now returning as adults (15 returning chicks from 4 different cohorts). With these (re)captures, we have gained an improved understanding of age-at-first-return: 1 year (5%), 2 year (70%), 3 year (20%), and 4 year (5%). We also updated and improved existing population models to gain a more robust estimate of juvenile survival: 0.752 (0.612-0.892). With this updated estimate, we projected the Kuaka population 30 years into the future. We estimated that in 2050 the Kuaka population will consist of 241 (2-951) adults.

Further work is underway to identify adequate conservation measures to recover this small population, including potential translocations. Thanks to the Birds New Zealand Research Fund this work has enabled substantial gains in understanding Kuaka population dynamics which will ultimately allow for better informed management alternatives.

JOHANNES FISCHER



## Swarovski NL Pure 8 x 32 Binoculars RRP \$3,690

As with the NL Pure 8 x 42 binoculars reviewed in the previous issue, the NL Pure 8 x 32s have a talon-sharp '3D' feel to the image, outstanding brightness and clarity, and an expansive field of view. They measure up at 144mm long by 130mm wide and weigh 640g, which didn't feel heavy in my hands. The light gathering is superb. Even in the shadow of Katiki Point where the light was gloomy to the naked eye the light flooded in when I put up these binoculars to my eyes and had an excellent view of a Hoiho coming ashore.

I also took them out on a pelagic day trip from Moeraki to the Otago Canyons. They have a 150-metre field of view at 1000-metres (compared to 159m/1000m for the 8 x 42s), and the apparent field of view is 62° compared to 69° for the 8 x 42s. This extensive field of view was just what the doctor ordered for rapid focus on flying seabirds.

The velvet smooth focus wheel glided swiftly enough to maintain focus on a Grey Petrel speeding past. I could make out the silvery ashy colour on the upper parts and its silvery mantle. Moving around the boat it felt like I had more manoeuvrability with these than the larger, heavier 8 x 42s. The smaller size of the 8 x 32s was just as comfortable in my hands, and the burnt orange colour of this pair drew admiring comments.

On the way back to land as the afternoon light was fading, Oscar Thomas saw a large bird about a hundred metres away flying parallel with the boat which he said was a white morph Southern Giant Petrel. I had seen the same bird with the naked eye moments before but it looked to be a dark morph giant petrel. Once I put up the binoculars I could see it was almost completely white, speckled with some sparse black flecks – undoubtedly the rare white morph.

I noticed there was an almost imperceptible, very slight softening of the image at the very edge of the field of view while I was looking into the far distance while out at sea. I had to search repeatedly to find this because it is very subtle and not at all obvious. If you want absolute sharpness at the edge of the image when looking into the far distance, the NL Pure 8 x 42s would be the better choice.

Overall, I found the NL Pure 8 x 32s to be excellent optics and very versatile in both fading and bright light conditions, and second only to the NL Pure 8 x 42s. My advice would be to visit the nearest retailer that stocks them and ask to try both of them out for yourself.

Swarovski produce an annual global birding publication called 'Closer'. If you would like a free copy, Swarovski has a limited number to send out within NZ. Just send them a request with your postal address to: [jp.klaus@swarovski.com](mailto:jp.klaus@swarovski.com)

MICHAEL SZABO, EDITOR



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



# EL THE LEGEND

SEE *THE* UNSEEN



SWAROVSKI  
OPTIK

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