

THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND INC.***Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa*****ANNUAL REPORT ON BEHALF OF COUNCIL FOR 2021**

It is my privilege to present this report on behalf of the Council to the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Birds New Zealand) for 2021. The Society is active and busy and is progressing several major projects. Some of these are highly visible such as the NZ Bird Atlas while others are very much in the background such as development of the new *Notornis* database.

Deceased Members

During the period of this report, I have been notified of the deaths of the following members. If members are aware of others, they should be brought to my attention.

Alastair Thompson

Jack Taylor

Kerry-Jayne Wilson

Martin N. Foggo

Rowley Taylor

Ruth Crockett

Terry Johnson

Tony Cartland

Council meetings

Using the Royal Society of New Zealand Zoom account, Council met online in March, September and December. Holding Zoom, or digital, meetings continue to make significant savings in expenditure to the Society. Council also met in person in June during the Conference and AGM in Thames.

Council also met informally to focus on Society finances to identify options for balancing our budgets. The Society has income from subscriptions and also grants and donations to fund our work. The management of the subscription income which funds the printing of *Notornis* and *Birds New Zealand* as well as the Executive Officers contract needs particular attention. As you will see from the Treasurers report, the Society ended 2021 with a significant operating profit, this was a result of donations. Council does not take this for granted and we will continue to focus on the long-term sustainable funding of the Society.

Council also moved three notices of Motion for consideration by the Society at the AGM in Thames. These were rule changes for the name of the Society, subscription date changes and an increase in the subscription rate for members. These were all passed by the AGM. Also, at the AGM I was able

to announce that Natalie Forsdick had accepted the position of Vice President. Council has discussed how we should respond to the COVID in New Zealand. This was of particular concern due to the potential need to cancel or modify at the last minute the Society AGMs in Thames, and in 2022 in Christchurch. We will continue to monitor Society activities to ensure that we are compliant with Government COVID regulations, and we do, of course, have a commitment to keeping members safe. Council also discussed a Code of Conduct for Society activities and I'm grateful to Natalie Forsdick for her work to develop a Code of Conduct and having this adopted by Council and posted on the Society website.

Council was pleased to observe that as at March 2022 the Society has 1,240 current members, which is an increase by 116 compared to March 2021 (from 1,124). As is normal we have a number 'past due' members who have not yet renewed and we will be following up with them to find why they are not renewing membership.

Health and Safety

The Society continues to have an effective Health and Safety Policy and set of procedures. I'm aware of three incidents during the year. One of these was not reported promptly and this was unfortunate as delayed reporting has prevented us from learning how to avoid this particular incident in the future.

Publications

Birds New Zealand magazine is a very professionally produced face of the Society. Michael Szabo continues to edit a friendly and well-presented magazine. As part of this Michael has been developing long term relationships with advertisers who support the Society. Both Heritage Expeditions and Swarovski Optik have regular full-page advertisements.

Craig Symes, editor of *Notornis* reports that *Notornis* continues to attract and publish important ornithological manuscripts on birds in the southern Pacific. Volume 68 contained 17 papers and 17 short notes. The on-line availability of *Notornis* papers has been kept up to date by Jim Briskie, University of Canterbury.

A back-room project that commenced during the year is editing of the pre-1990 online versions of *Notornis* so that each individual paper is available as a stand-alone file rather than the whole volume of *Notornis* needing to be downloaded. This will make searching for papers faster and easier for researchers.

During the year development of the fifth edition of the *Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand* was initiated. This is being produced as an Occasional Publication of the Society. Occasional publications' is a new resource being developed to publish manuscripts/documents/ornithological work not strictly suited to, or within the scope of, *Notornis*.

Partners

Our partnership with the T-Gear Charitable Trust continues to underpin the *Birds New Zealand Research Fund*. The wide range of research being funded through this partnership is making a real difference and you will be seeing the results of this partnership here at the Christchurch Conference.

We have established a new Partnership with Toi Toi Wines based in Marlborough. Toi Toi Wines have undertaken to work with the Society and with Wildlife Management International to fund Atlas field work to cover remote parts of New Zealand to ensure wider atlas coverage.

During the year the Society joined the Royal Society of New Zealand as a 'Constituent Organisation'. This is part of our long-term strategic plan to increase knowledge and understanding about ornithology and of the Ornithological Society as a scientific society in New Zealand. So far, the results of joining have been positive with opportunities to join 'Constituent Organisation' discussions with other like-minded scientific societies and to gain access to RSNZ newsletters.

During the year our partnership with Goodness Kitchen ended. This partnership had supported the Society for five years and was very productive for the NZ Bird Atlas. I acknowledge the support from Mike and Glenys Glover over this time for supporting the Society's work.

Social media

The Society's accounts on Facebook and Twitter continue to grow. We now have over 10,500 followers on Facebook. Michael Szabo manages this account on behalf of the Society and has been using it to promote 'event' notices for the 2022 New Zealand Bird Conference and AGM.

The Society Twitter account continues to grow, reaching 3250 followers in the first half of 2022. Our Twitter account complements our Facebook page in sharing local ornithological news and research with the wider public.

Membership Secretary

Members will have noticed that there has been turnover in this important voluntary position with Imogen Warren recently standing down. Imogen oversaw the implementation of the new membership system on a new computer platform and the transition away from receiving cheque payments for subscriptions. As with the roll out of any computer system there are small matters to be attended and Imogen did a sterling job of keeping on top of these and ensuring a quality service to members. That this move was a success was due to Imogen's diligence. Council is pleased to report that Kurien (Koshy) Yohannan, Dunedin, has been appointed to carry out this very important function. Council is grateful that someone with Koshy's experience is enthusiastic to support this important function for the society.

Youth camp

A group of 13 young birders participated in the 2021 Birds New Zealand Youth Camp organised by the Hawke's Bay Branch in April. During the camp, students learned valuable bird identification skills and bird surveying methods, as well as hearing about local conservation efforts. The camp could only work because of the efforts of leader Ian Southey and his support team which included Brent Stephenson, Sav Saville, John Berry, Bernie Kelly, David and Vicky Melville, Angie Denby and Lynne Anderson, who initiated this Youth Camp and made it happen.

New Zealand Bird Atlas

The team at Wildlife Management International have carried on with their great work supporting the New Zealand Bird Atlas. In January this year they were able to report that 92.85% of grid squares have some data in them. Data has been gathered by 1,113 observers who between them have completed 229,000 checklists. The team responded to emails and phone calls as well as engaging with other organisations to showcase the Atlas. A small poster was published in the November 2021 NZ Ecological Society newsletter and a larger article promoting the Atlas has been submitted to the Federated Mountain Clubs (FMC) quarterly magazine.

Monthly challenges have continued each month as a successful tool to engage and tailor the Atlas community's behaviour to increase coverage. Key challenge types are orientated towards increasing nocturnal effort and grid square coverage. The Atlas team has continued regular contact with the eBird/Cornell team in the US.

Beach Patrol Scheme

2020 produced no significant wrecks and no particularly unusual species reports Lloyd Esler. There were single specimens of Pitt Island shag (on Chatham Island), Kerguelen petrel, white-phase giant petrel, Arctic skua and reef heron. There were no mass mortalities but there was evidence of Canada goose and black-backed gull control programmes and high mortality in a red-billed gull colony on Mana Island. Returns continue to decline and represent a drop to about a third of the number of kilometres covered and the number of patrols being undertaken a decade ago.

The Beach Patrol database is presently being used for new academic studies on little penguins (Massey University), on sooty and flesh footed shearwaters (Auckland University) and, intriguingly, was used for teaching purposes by design students at Victoria University of Wellington.

Moult Scheme

Micah Scholer reports success in digitization of all the Society's moult cards last year. He is also able to report a significant increase in records in the moult scheme database, from nearly 6,000 in 2020 to 17,270. This unprecedented growth was almost exclusively thanks to Adrian Riegen and the New Zealand Wader Study Group, which contributed a trove of primary flight feather moult on bar-tailed godwit, red knot, S I pied oystercatcher and wrybill stretching back to the 1980s. As a result, these selected waders have gone from some of our most data deficient to the four most information rich species available.

Another notable contribution came from Graeme Taylor, who provided spread wing photos of birds from the Chatham Islands. From these Micah was able to estimate primary moult scores for nearly 50 individuals, several of which represent 'species firsts' for the Scheme (e.g., Chatham Warbler and Black Robin).

Over 2021 the moult scheme was approached by researchers from South Africa, Nigeria, the United Kingdom, and the United States interested in utilizing our data for comparative studies. This is exactly what the database is meant for and is an exciting development for the Society's data.

Nest Recording Scheme

The scheme is under-utilised with only one contribution of nine cards of Welcome Swallow, and no requests for nest record cards. Roger Sharp (Scheme convenor) reiterates his concern that with the low contributions of cards we can no longer provide continuous records to show trends in bird numbers and nesting outcomes.

Records Appraisal Committee

Colin Miskelly reports a total of 74 Unusual Bird Reports received in 2021. This was substantially fewer than the 95 UBRs received in 2020. There is no obvious reason for this decrease. Fifty (68%) of the 2021 UBRs were accepted by the committee. No new species were added to the New Zealand list. The online database of Unusual Bird Reports was suspended during the year because it is no longer functioning properly. As a part of the Phase III development of the Society's website the old Unusual Bird Reporting system will be replaced in 2022 with a more functional system to be hosted on the Birds New Zealand website.

National Wader Census

Adrian Riegen reports that a total of 104,073 waders of 21 species were counted during the June-July 2021 wader census, down from 116,369 waders of 21 species counted in 2020. Gaps in coverage in the Far North remain a concern. A total of 122,016 waders of 24 species were counted during the Summer 2021 wader census. This was the lowest count since full coverage was reinstated in 2006 and can be mostly explained by poorer coverage than usual in certain areas, brought about by a range of reasons, including lack of personnel, Covid restrictions, weather and lack of boats. Again, the Far North suffered from a lack of coverage. Adrian highlighted that the Banded Dotterel count of 4,797 was the lowest since 2013 and New Zealand Dotterel numbers were higher than 2020 but slightly lower than in 2019.

Banding Liaison Officer

John Stewart, the Society's banding Liaison officer, reports that seven new projects were approved in 2021 bringing the total to 13 projects within the Society's Wildlife Act Authority.

John also reports that work continues on the development of the DoC led FALCON database of banding records and he has participated in several on-line training/question and answer sessions. John commented on the forthcoming "Guide to Ageing and Sexing New Zealand passerines". He has also made suggestions for a forthcoming revision of the NZ Banders Manual and participated in the inaugural (virtual) meeting of Banders without Borders where representatives of the NZ Banding Scheme met with those from the US Geological Survey Bird Banding Laboratory and with Canadian banders.

Checklist Committee

Colin Miskelly reports that the committee has focused on completing a fifth edition of the *Checklist of the birds of New Zealand*. Additionally, the committee has successfully developed a "Checklist

mentor scheme” with 12 members taking up the offer. The fifth edition of the *Checklist of the birds of New Zealand* will be published electronically on the Birds New Zealand/*Notornis* website in both PDF and HTML formats.

Library report

Trina Smith reports that the library continues to receive requests for books, photos and journal articles from members along with general birding and information enquiries from the New Zealand public and from researchers. The ‘round-robin’ journal post-out has been severely curtailed by Covid Lockdown restrictions. This was exacerbated by a computer system upgrade affecting the generic login utilised at the Museum, that resulted in a period of no access to the library database before the issue was resolved.

Scientific Committee

Graeme Taylor reports that the Scientific Committee is seeking to expand its membership to broaden the skill base and to provide for turnover of members. Graeme further reports that the main task of the committee was reviewing the BNZRF research proposals and that there were many excellent research applications and it was extremely difficult to rank these.

Graeme gave a short Report on his work as the Society representative on the World Seabird Union. Graeme reports that the “Third World Seabird Conference” took place in October 2021 as an on-line conference due to the COVID pandemic. The format required online sessions to run in two different time zones (Pacific and Atlantic) but all talks were recorded and are available for participants to view later. This worked well for the 800 participants. This was the highest attendance yet at a world seabird conference and reflected the low registration costs, and cost savings through avoiding travel and accommodation.

Regional Representatives

I wish to acknowledge Neil Robertson, and Ian Southey have over this last year stood down as their respective regions’ representatives. In their time as Regional Representative both Neil and Ian have hosted Society conferences and AGM’s. As I say every year the annual reports that the Regional Representatives prepare to summarise the years activities are a fascinating summary of a range of projects and activities throughout New Zealand. Regional Representatives are an essential network for Council to understand the expectations of the membership and to ensure that matters are raised and debated with and by Council. A highlight for me this year was being invited to an online catch up facilitated by Ian MacLean. It was good to hear the work being done in the regions. The Society cannot function without the ongoing commitment and hard work of the Regional Representatives. On behalf of Council thank you all.

Thank you

The Society is a success because many members put their hands up and offer skills and time to make things happen. In addition to all the Convenors and Regional Representatives I would like to acknowledge Paul Sagar who has stood down from the role of Assistant Editor for *Notornis*. A role he

has occupied for many years now. Craig notes that support that Paul has given him has been invaluable.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of Roger Sharp (Auckland) who as the Society's Web Support Officer has been instrumental in the development of the Membership system, and the redevelopment of the Society's web presence. The intention of this development work is to make access by members to the resources offered by the Society more accessible and easier to access. Without the support provided by Roger the development would have been more difficult.

Yet again a large amount of the success of the Society is due to the efforts of the Society's Executive Officer, Ingrid Hutzler. Throughout 2021 Ingrid kept supporting Regional Representatives, scheme convenors and Council with prompt and thoughtful responses to emails and queries.

I also acknowledge the ongoing support and work of Council. They have all contributed to supporting the work of Council and ensured that we have robust discussions and have quality decision as a result. I particularly wish to acknowledge Josie Galbraith who's term ends at this AGM and has chosen not to stand again. Josie has been an excellent sounding board for ideas and helped develop some areas for new work in the future.

Thank you to you all.

Bruce McKinlay

President.