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## Vagrant and extra-limital bird records accepted by the Birds New Zealand Records Appraisal Committee 2019–2020

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**Abstract:** We report Records Appraisal Committee (RAC) decisions regarding Unusual Bird Reports received between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2020. Among the 149 submissions accepted by the RAC were the first New Zealand records of collared petrel (*Pterodroma brevipes*), South Polar skua (*Catharacta maccormicki*), and rose-crowned fruit dove (*Ptilinopus regina*). We also report the first accepted breeding record for gull-billed tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*), and the second accepted sightings of Australian white-faced storm petrel (*Pelagodroma marina dulciae*) and buff-breasted sandpiper (*Tryngites subruficollis*). Other notable records included the first records of Atlantic yellow-nosed mollymawk (*Thalassarache chlororhynchos*) from the Snares Islands, nankeen kestrel (*Falco cenchroides*) from Antipodes Island, long-tailed skua (*Stercorarius longicaudus*) from the Chatham Islands, and Arctic tern (*Sterna paradisaea*) from the Bounty Islands.

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### INTRODUCTION

Birds New Zealand (Birds NZ) requires sightings of vagrant or extra-limital bird species, or species otherwise considered to be extinct, to be verified by the Records Appraisal Committee (RAC) before the

records can be presented as accepted New Zealand records in the periodicals *Notornis* or *New Zealand Birds*, or in books and websites published by Birds NZ.

We here report RAC decisions made on Unusual Bird Reports (UBRs) received between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2020, following on from the last report of the RAC (Miskelly *et al.* 2019).

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Results of RAC decisions are posted on the Unusual Bird Report website (<http://rare.birds.org.nz/>) every 2 months. The website provides a means for observers to determine whether a UBR has already been submitted for any vagrant bird seen or reported, and (within 2–4 months) to see the RAC decision on the UBR. This biennial report provides more detail about sightings than what is presented on the website, including providing context for the significance of each sighting.

Each Unusual Bird Report received is given a number whereby the first four digits represent the year the record was received and the last three digits the chronological sequence of receipt within that year. These reference numbers are given for each record below. Nomenclature and taxonomic sequence follow Gill *et al.* (2010), apart from where we follow Heidrech *et al.* (1998) in placing large shearwaters in the genus *Ardenna*. Where images of birds reported here have been published on New Zealand Birds Online (NZBO, [www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz](http://www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz), viewed 5 May 2021) this is mentioned in the text.

We discuss the context of each accepted record in relation to the history of each species' occurrence in New Zealand. The RAC convenor maintains a database of verified sightings of vagrant birds in New Zealand. Information from this database is presented below (sourced as "CMM, *unpubl. data*") if it conflicts with or augments information from published sources.

## DECISIONS ON SUBMITTED SIGHTINGS

### Accepted records of vagrant and rare migrant species to New Zealand

#### Plumed whistling duck (*Dendrocygna eytoni*)

One at Anderson Park, Taradale, Napier, on 11 Feb 2020 (Jim Cowan; UBR 2020/020) was the last survivor of three that arrived at the park in 2011 (Miskelly *et al.* 2013).

#### Chestnut-breasted shelduck (*Tadorna tadornoides*)

One to nine birds at Tip Lagoon, Invercargill, between 8 Oct (3 birds) and 28 Nov 2018 (2 birds), with the highest count on 31 Oct (Sean Jacques; UBR 2019/057). Two females at Miranda, Firth of Thames, on 8 Jan 2019 (Lisa Fraser; UBR 2020/109), with one female there on 18 Jan 2019 (Matthias Dehling; UBR 2020/035). A pair at Ringaringa Golf Course, Stewart Island, on 5 Dec 2020 (Matt Jones; UBR 2020/106). Chestnut-breasted shelducks were also recorded at Miranda and Invercargill (but no other sites) during 2017–18 (Miskelly *et al.* 2019). There are about 38 accepted records in New Zealand since 1973 (Heather 1987; CMM, *unpubl. data*).

#### Chestnut teal (*Anas castanea*)

A male in eclipse plumage at Tip Lagoon, Invercargill, 19–21 Oct 2018 (Sean Jacques; UBR 2019/056) was the 19<sup>th</sup> accepted New Zealand record, and the 1<sup>st</sup> since 2010 (Miskelly *et al.* 2011).

#### Northern shoveler (*Anas clypeata*)

The most frequently reported unusual bird species during 2019–20. All records were of males in full or partial breeding plumage. One at Tip Lagoon, Invercargill 21 Oct to 3 Nov 2018 (Sean Jacques; UBR 2019/058); one at Bromley Oxidation Ponds on 26 Apr 2019 (Adam Colley; UBR 2019/033, image on NZBO); one at Pegasus wetland, North Canterbury, on 4 May 2019 (Bev Alexander; UBR 2019/037), and again 27 May to 28 Aug 2020 (Eleanor Gunby, Richard Scofield, Christian Cosgrove, and Jean Williams; UBRs 2020/069, 2020/108 & 2020/084, image on NZBO). One at Kaitorete Spit, Lake Ellesmere 16 Jun 2019 (Dale McEntee; UBR 2019/049); one at Te Aroha, Waikato, on 19 Aug 2019 (Russell Cannings; UBR 2019/069); one at Otaki sewage pond on 16 & 17 Sep 2019 (Hugh Robertson; UBR 2019/071); one at Lake Elterwater, Marlborough, on 29 Sep 2019 (Paul Gibson; UBR 2019/077, images on NZBO); one at Waituna Lagoon, Southland, on 16 Nov 2019 (Sean Jacques; UBR 2019/091); and one at Lake Rotomahana inlet, Waimangu Valley, Rotorua, on 19 Jul 2020 (Troy Makan; UBR 2020/068).

There had been only nine accepted records of northern shovelers from New Zealand before 2017 (Miskelly *et al.* 2019). Multiple individual birds were sighted from October 2017, with at least five different birds present in June 2018 (Miskelly *et al.* 2019).

#### Hoary-headed grebe (*Poliiocephalus poliocephalus*)

A pair with three fully-grown young at Lake Elterwater, Marlborough, on 13 Jul 2019 (Maria Clement; UBR 2019/062, images on NZBO). One or two pairs bred at this site in 2017–18, following several sightings at Lake Elterwater since 2014 (Miskelly *et al.* 2019).

#### Western rockhopper penguin (*Eudyptes chrysocome*)

One at Victory Beach, Otago Peninsula, on 9 Feb 2019 (Trudi Webster; UBR 2019/034, Fig. 1 and image on NZBO) was the first mainland record of this species. Western rockhopper penguins breed at the Falkland Islands and southern Chile. Within New Zealand they had previously been recorded solely from the Snares Islands, between 1985 and 2000 (Tennyson & Miskelly 1989; Miskelly *et al.* 2001).



**Figure 1.** Newly-moulted immature western rockhopper penguin (*Eudyptes chrysocome*), Victory Beach, Otago Peninsula, 9 February 2019. First mainland record (image by Trudi Webster).

#### **Macaroni penguin (*Eudyptes chrysolophus*)**

One moulting at Boat Harbour, Snares Islands, on 6 Mar 2019 (Paul Sagar; UBR 2019/026) was the 5<sup>th</sup> reported from the Snares Islands (Miskelly *et al.* 2001, 2017). The only other New Zealand records are from Campbell Island (Kinsky 1969; Miskelly *et al.* 2013).

#### **Royal penguin (*Eudyptes schlegeli*)**

One at Te Whanga Lagoon mouth, Chatham Island, on 14 Feb 2020 (Keri Moir; UBR 2020/033) was the 4<sup>th</sup> record from the Chatham Islands (Miskelly *et al.* 2006; CMM, *unpubl. data*). One on Whenua Hou/Codfish Island on 6 Mar 2020 (Sarah Little; UBR 2020/028) was the first record from the Stewart Island region. There have been at least 11 records from the South Island (Miskelly *et al.* 2019), and two from the southern North Island (specimens from Lyall Bay, 10 Jun 1926, and Tora, Wairarapa, 13 Feb 2013, held by Te Papa).

#### **Atlantic yellow-nosed mollymawk (*Thalassarche chlororhynchos*)**

One photographed offshore from the Snares Islands on 15 Nov 2019 (John Martin; UBR 2020/011) was the fifth record from New Zealand, and the first away from the Chatham Islands or Kaikoura (Miskelly *et al.* 2017)

#### **Juan Fernandez petrel (*Pterodroma externa*)**

One north-west of Mana Island, Cook Strait, on 24 Mar 2019 (Colin Miskelly; UBR 2019/025) was

the fourth record away from the Chatham Islands (Miskelly *et al.* 2015).

#### **Collared petrel (*Pterodroma brevipes*)**

One near King Bank, north-east of Three Kings Islands, on 4 Mar 2011 (Brent Stephenson; UBR 2019/032, Fig. 2 and images on NZBO). One 150 km north-west of Three Kings Islands, and another 200 km north-west, on 17 Mar 2019 (Ian Saville; UBRs 2019/065 & 2019/066). Collared petrels breed on a few islands in the tropical south-west Pacific, including islands in Vanuatu and Fiji (Tennyson *et al.* 2012; O'Brien *et al.* 2016). The sightings reported here are the first, second, and third records of collared petrel from New Zealand.



**Figure 2.** Collared petrel (*Pterodroma brevipes*) north-east of Three Kings Islands, 4 March 2011. First New Zealand record (image by Brent Stephenson, Eco-Vista).

#### **Pink-footed shearwater (*Ardenna creatopus*)**

One off Kaikoura on 6 Dec 2001 (Alan Tennyson; UBR 2019/048, images on NZBO), and another at Wreck Reef, east coast of Stewart Island, on 23 Nov 2018 (Matt Jones; UBR 2019/003) were the sixth and tenth records from New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2019).

#### **Great shearwater (*Ardenna gravis*)**

One east of the Poor Knights Islands on 20 Apr 2011 (Mark Maddock; UBR 2020/053) was the seventh record from New Zealand, and was one of four sightings that month, with the three others all near Foveaux Strait (Miskelly *et al.* 2013).



**Figure 3.** Australian white-faced storm petrel (*Pelagodroma marina dulciae*) offshore from Kawhia, 2 April 2016. First live New Zealand record (image by Matthias Dehling).

**Australian white-faced storm petrel (*Pelagodroma marina dulciae*)**

One at sea off Kawhia on 2 Apr 2016 (Matthias Dehling; UBR 2020/036, Fig. 3 and image on NZBO) was the second New Zealand record, and the first record of a live bird of this subspecies (Imber 1984).

**Red-footed booby (*Sula sula*)**

A white morph bird found dead on Pakatoa Island on 15 May 2017 (Fiona Powell and Matt Rayner; UBR 2020/006) is now a skeleton in Auckland War Memorial Museum (LB15822). White tail feathers indicate that this bird was of the south-west Pacific subspecies *S. s. rubripes* (contra the previous record, which was of the eastern Pacific subspecies *S. s. websteri*; Miskelly *et al.* 2019). One (subspecies unknown) perched on a boat in the North Taranaki Bight on 10 May 2019 (Ian Brown; UBR 2019/036). These are the third and fourth accepted records from New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2017, 2019).

**Brown booby (*Sula leucogaster*)**

An immature at Muriwai gannet colony, west Auckland, on 3 Aug 2019 (Harry Boorman; UBR 2019/059). Brown boobies probably reach mainland New Zealand every year, with most records from the northern North Island (Gill *et al.* 2010; Miskelly *et al.* 2019).

**Frigatebird sp. (*Fregata* sp.)**

A frigatebird of uncertain specific identity was seen at Masterton on 9 Aug 1949 (Bob Stidolph via Nikki McArthur; UBR 2020/062).

**Little egret (*Egretta garzetta*)**

One at Rough Island, Tasman, 15 Jan to 7 May 2003 (UBR 2020/082) and 8 Feb to 5 Jul 2004 (UBR 2020/083; both records by Peter and Charmaine

Field), and again on 21 Jun 2020 (Peter Field; UBR 2020/064). One at Okari Estuary, south of Westport, on 6 Oct 2015 (UBR 2020/081) and on 17 Jul 2016 (UBR 2020/080; both records by Peter and Charmaine Field); one at Cobden, Greymouth 22 Jun 2019 (Annette Ching; UBR 2019/055); one at Ashley River mouth, North Canterbury, on 17 Nov 2019 (Bev Alexander; UBR 2020/061); two at Pahurehure Inlet, Manukau Harbour, on 21 May 2020 (Jampa Kalden; UBR 2020/052); one at Manawatu River estuary on 7 Jun 2020 (Alan Tennyson; UBR 2020/059). Up to five little egrets are present in New Zealand most years (Miskelly *et al.* 2019).

**Glossy ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*)**

One between Manapouri and Te Anau on 20 Apr 2017 (Robert Leslie; UBR 2020/085) was a rare inland record of this colonising species, which has been breeding in New Zealand since 2015 (Thompson 2015; Anonymous 2016; Miskelly *et al.* 2019).

**Black kite (*Milvus migrans*)**

One near Patetonga, Hauraki Plains, on 12 Feb 2020 (Russell Cannings; UBR 2020/027) may have been the same bird that was present north of Meremere (about 35 km away) for more than a year from 2016 (Hyde *et al.* 2017).

**Nankeen kestrel (*Falco cenchroides*)**

Two on Antipodes Island, 2 Feb 2013 (Kath Walker and Graeme Elliott; UBR 2019/043) were the first recorded from the island, and the second record from a New Zealand subantarctic island following one on Campbell Island in 1942 (Miskelly *et al.* 2019). One at Peria, Northland, on 24 May 2019 (Kerrie Edmonds; UBR 2019/045). The nankeen kestrel is an infrequent straggler to mainland New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010).

**Great knot (*Calidris tenuirostris*)**

One at Farewell Spit on 6 Jul 2019 (Steve Wood; UBR 2019/053); one at Karaka shellbanks, Manukau Harbour 23 Jan 2020 (Oscar Thomas; UBR 2020/015). There are about 20 previous accepted records from New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2017).

**Sanderling (*Calidris alba*)**

One at Awarua Bay, Southland, 17 Nov 2018 & 17 Feb 2019 (UBR 2019/046) and again on 29 Dec 2019 (UBR 2020/009; all records by Sean Jacques). One at Ashley River estuary, North Canterbury, on 10 & 16 Nov 2020 (Christian Cosgrove and Adam Colley; UBR 2020/100). One or two sanderlings reach New Zealand most years (Saunders 2015; Miskelly *et al.* 2019).

**Little stint (*Calidris minuta*)**

One at Karaka, Manukau Harbour, on 15 Sep 2019 (Tony Habraken and David Lawrie; UBR 2019/070, images on NZBO) was the fourth record from New Zealand, and the first away from Lake Ellesmere, Canterbury (Miskelly *et al.* 2011). Another was seen at Lake Ellesmere from 14 Oct to 25 Nov 2019 (Nick Allen; UBR 2020/079, images on NZBO).

**Broad-billed sandpiper (*Limicola falcinellus*)**

One at Miranda, Firth of Thames, on 20 Nov 1994 (Nicholas Allen; UBR 2020/038), and another at the same site on 22 Jan 2019 (David Melville; UBR 2019/010). There have been eight accepted records from Miranda, which is about a third of the New Zealand records (CMM, *unpubl. data*).

**Buff-breasted sandpiper (*Tryngites subruficollis*)**

One at Ashley River estuary, North Canterbury, on 19 Nov 2019 (Kelly and Jamee Johnson; UBR 2019/090, images on NZBO) was likely the same bird that was subsequently found at Kaitorete Spit, Lake Ellesmere, on 22 Dec 2019 (Adam Colley and David Thomas; UBR 2020/026, images on NZBO). There is one previous record from New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2015).

**Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*)**

One at Hikurangi Channel, Te Whanga Lagoon, Chatham Island, on 24 Oct 2020 (Mike Bell; UBR 2020/104) was the seventh accepted record from the Chatham Islands (Miskelly *et al.* 2006, 2017).

**Wandering tattler (*Tringa incana*)**

Two at Waitangi West, Chatham Island, on 29 Aug 2018 (Kailash Willis; UBR 2019/042), and one at Cape Patisson, Chatham Island, on 13 Oct 2020 (Mike Bell; UBR 2020/105). There are seven previous accepted records from the Chatham Islands (Miskelly *et al.* 2006).

**Common sandpiper (*Tringa hypoleucos*)**

One at Waipu Cove, North Auckland, on 24 Dec 2019 (Ayla Wiles; UBR 2020/014). There are 38 previous accepted records from New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2015).

**Common greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*)**

One at Okawa Point, Chatham Island, on 30 Oct 2020 (Mike Bell; UBR 2020/103) was the second record from the Chatham Islands (Sibson 1978). One at Kaitorete Spit, Lake Ellesmere, on 29 Nov 2020 (Andrew Crossland; UBR 2020/107). Formerly a regular vagrant to New Zealand, greenshanks

have been reported at a rate of less than one per annum since 2000 (Miskelly *et al.* 2015).

**Grey phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicaria*)**

One in breeding plumage off Kaikoura on 17 July 2019 (Richard Crossley; UBR 2019/054, images on NZBO) was the 12<sup>th</sup> accepted record from New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2013).

**Red-necked phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*)**

One at Nelson sewage ponds on 16 May 2018 (Matthias Dehling; UBR 2020/034) was the 15<sup>th</sup> accepted record from New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2011).

**Grey plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*)**

One at Whanganui River estuary on 22 Oct 2019 (Paul Gibson; UBR 2019/083, images on NZBO). Single grey plovers were reported annually from 2001 to 2005; this is the fourth record since then (Miskelly *et al.* 2019).

**Lesser sand plover (*Charadrius mongolus*)**

One at Farewell Spit on 23 Feb 2019 (Steve Wood; UBR 2019/023); one at Miranda, Firth of Thames, on 16 Jan 2020 (Oscar Thomas; UBR 2020/016). Previously considered an annual visitor to New Zealand, these are only the second and third records since 2010 (Gill *et al.* 2010; Miskelly *et al.* 2015).

**Greater sand plover (*Charadrius leschenaultii*)**

One at Ashley River estuary, North Canterbury, on 14 Oct 2019 (Jill Hanna; UBR 2020/001) and again on 19 Sep 2020 (Bev Alexander; UBR 2020/087, images on NZBO). Considered an annual visitor to New Zealand before 2010, these are only the third and fourth records since then (Gill *et al.* 2010; Miskelly *et al.* 2017).

**South Polar skua (*Catharacta maccormicki*)**

One collected at Laurie Harbour, Auckland Island, on 28 Mar 1904, was the first record of this species from New Zealand, predating the next two records by 36 years (UBR 2019/052; Falla 1940; Miskelly 2020a).

**Long-tailed skua (*Stercorarius longicaudus*)**

One south of Pyramid Rock, Chatham Islands, on 12 Dec 2009 (Peter Zika; UBR 2020/057) was the first record from the Chatham Islands. Long-tailed skuas are scarce annual migrants to New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2019).

**Laughing gull (*Leucophaeus atricilla*)**

An adult in breeding plumage at Wairoa River, Wairoa, on 26 Jan 2018 (Graham Fyfe; UBR 2020/067), and at Cape Kidnappers on 18 Oct 2018 (Colin Lindsay; UBR 2020/086). These birds were likely the same individual that was present near Opotiki in December 2017 and also the previous summer (i.e. New Zealand's first laughing gull; Miskelly *et al.* 2017, 2019).

**Little tern (*Sternula albifrons*)**

One at Motutapu Point, Pitt Island, Chatham Islands, on 3 Nov 2020 (Mike Bell; UBR 2020/102) was the second record from the Chatham Islands (Bell & Bell 2002).

**Gull-billed tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*)**

A pair attending a nest with three eggs at Awarua Bay, Southland, on 21 Dec 2019 was the first recorded breeding of this species in New Zealand (Glenda Rees; UBR 2019/094, Fig. 4 and images on NZBO).

A major influx of gull-billed terns began in 2011 (Miskelly *et al.* 2013), and a few birds continue to be reported. Up to five birds were present at Manawatu River mouth on 4 Jul (1), 9 Oct (4) & 29 Dec (5) 2011 (Alan Tennyson; UBR 2020/112), with one bird there on 2 Jun 2020 (Imogen Warren; UBR 2020/055). Two at Lake Ellesmere, Canterbury, on 1 Feb 2019 (Andrew Crossland; UBR 2019/014). One at Bell Island, Waimea Inlet, on 12 Feb 2019 (David Melville; UBR 2019/013) and on 19 Oct 2019 (Don Cooper; UBR 2019/082). One at Lake Wairarapa 20 Feb 2019 (Darren Lees and Diane John; UBR 2019/022). One at Motueka sandspit on 8 Apr 2020 (Steve Wood; UBR 2020/048) and 6 Jun 2020 (Fraser Gurney; UBR 2020/077).



**Figure 4.** Gull-billed tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*) nest with 3 eggs, Awarua Bay, 21 December 2019. First New Zealand breeding record (image by Glenda Rees).

**White-winged black tern (*Chlidonias leucopterus*)**

An adult in breeding plumage northeast of Haast, West Coast, on 9 Jan 1985 (Ray and Deb Wershler; UBR 2019/008). One at Manawatu River estuary on 29 Dec 2012 (Alan Tennyson; UBR 2020/114, images on NZBO), and two at Ahuriri estuary, Napier, on 12 Apr 2019 (Lynne Anderson; UBR 2019/031). White-winged black terns are regularly present and not reportable in the eastern South Island (Miskelly *et al.* 2019).

**Whiskered tern (*Chlidonias hybridus*)**

One at Balclutha airfield, South Otago, on 31 Jan 2020 (Richard Schofield; UBR 2020/017) was the 12<sup>th</sup> accepted record from New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2019).

**Arctic tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)**

One at Aramoana Mole, Otago, on 25 Dec 2014 (Derek Onley; UBR 2019/029). At least two at the Bounty Islands, in late Oct 2019 (Alan Tennyson; UBR 2020/029, image on NZBO) were the first record from this subantarctic island group.

**Common tern (*Sterna hirundo*)**

One at Waikanae River estuary on 20 Jan 2011 (UBR 2020/116, image on NZBO), with another there on 29 Dec 2015 (UBR 2020/115; both records Alan Tennyson). One at Manawatu River estuary on 29 Dec 2011 (Alan Tennyson; UBR 2020/113), 22 Jan 2019 (Imogen Warren; UBR 2019/006), 3 Jan 2020 (Alan Tennyson; UBR 2020/008, image on NZBO) 22 Mar 2020 (Imogen Warren; UBR 2020/031), and 19 & 22 Dec 2020 (Imogen Warren and Alan Tennyson; UBR 2020/111). One at Lake Ellesmere outlet, Canterbury, on 6 Feb 2019 (Andrew Crossland; UBR 2019/016); one at Ashley River mouth, north Canterbury, on 11 Feb 2020 (Adam Colley; UBR 2020/025). One in breeding plumage at Big Sand Island, Kaipara Harbour, on 6 Jun 2020 (Phil Hammond; UBR 2020/099).

There are about 53 accepted records of common terns from New Zealand, with nearly half of these being from the Manawatu estuary/Foxton Beach or from Waikanae, 49 km to the south (CMM, *unpubl. data*).

**Crested tern (*Sterna bergii*)**

One at Whanganui River estuary on 22 Oct 2019 (Lynne Douglas and Peter Frost; UBR 2019/084) was the 17<sup>th</sup> accepted record from New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2017).

**Rose-crowned fruit-dove (*Ptilinopus regina*)**

One found alive on a vessel moored in South

Taranaki Bight on 23 Aug 2019 (and subsequently killed as a perceived biosecurity risk) was the first record of this species from New Zealand (UBR 2019/095; Miskelly 2020b).

#### **Pallid cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*)**

A juvenile near Bainham, Golden Bay, on 11 Dec 2019 (Steve Wood; UBR 2020/002, images on NZBO) was the seventh accepted record from New Zealand (Scofield 2008).

#### **Barn owl (*Tyto alba*)**

Footage of one at Milson, Palmerston North, on 8 Apr 2020 was captured on a security camera (Trevor Anderson; UBR 2020/041). Despite having an established breeding population in the Far North (Hyde & Matthews 2017), and many sightings being reported elsewhere in the country, this is the first sighting accepted by the RAC since 2008.

#### **White-throated needletail (*Hirundapus caudacutus*)**

One south of Punakaiki, West Coast, on 11 Nov 1977 (Derek Onley; UBR 2019/041); one at Tawhiti Rahi, Poor Knights Islands, on 5 Dec 2019 (Edin Whitehead; UBR 2019/092); one at Farewell Spit 14 Dec 2019 (Steve Wood; UBR 2020/003); at least 80 at Upper Moutere during 13-20 Feb 2020 (Steve Wood; UBR 2020/049). White-throated needletails are frequent vagrants to New Zealand (Gill *et al.* 2010). The Upper Moutere sighting was one of the largest flocks reported in New Zealand. McCaskill (1943) reported “hundreds” near Greymouth on 2 Dec 1942, with “60 to 70 birds, or even more” reported by a different observer nearby on 5 Dec 1942. At least 60 were seen at Tautuku, South Otago, in February 1979 (Miller 1980).

#### **Fork-tailed swift (*Apus pacificus*)**

One at Halfmoon Bay, Stewart Island, on 5 Dec 2019 (Ian Saville; UBR 2019/093), with three seen at nearby Lee Bay on 25 Dec 2019 (Jack Bushong; UBR 2020/040). One at Orangihina Park, Te Atatu, Auckland, on 21 Mar 2020 (Ian McLean; UBR 2020/050); one at Deep Bay, Arapawa Island, Marlborough Sounds, on 20 Oct 2020 (Peter Reese; UBR 2020/089). There were 16 previous accepted New Zealand records, with the most recent on Antipodes Island in 2002 (Medway 2003; CMM, *unpubl. data*).

#### **Black-faced cuckoo-shrike (*Coracina novaehollandiae*)**

One at Waimarama, Waikato, on 8 Jul 2019 (David Walter; UBR 2019/086) was the 22<sup>nd</sup> accepted record from New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2017).

#### **Masked woodswallow (*Artamus personatus*)**

An adult male at Waitawheta, Waihi, on 11 Nov 2019 (David Hartley; UBR 2019/087) was the third accepted record from New Zealand, and the first since 2006 (Te Papa specimen OR.028216 from Otatara, Southland, 16 Oct 2006).

#### **Australian tree martin (*Petrochelidon nigricans*)**

One at Punakaiki River estuary, West Coast, on 5 Jun 1977 (Derek Onley; UBR2019/039); one at Farewell Spit on 14 Dec 2019 (Steve Wood; UBR 2020/004); one at Lake Ellesmere, Canterbury, on 17 Feb 2020 (Ian Saville; UBR 2020/023); one at Wainono Lake Road, South Canterbury, on 25 Oct 2020 (Fraser Gurney; UBR 2020/094). There are more than 50 accepted records from New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2019).

#### **Accepted extra-limital records of New Zealand breeding species**

##### **Cape Barren goose (*Cereopsis novaehollandiae*)**

One at Te Marua Lakes, Upper Hutt, on 24 Oct 2020 (Sue Wild; UBR 2020/090), and one at Waiwhakailho River mouth, New Plymouth, on 2 Nov 2020 (Jean Caulton; UBR 2020/097). Cape Barren geese are widely held by wildfowl enthusiasts (Frost 2013), and are no longer reportable from the main islands.

##### **Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*)**

One at Boat Harbour, Snares Islands, on 14 Jan 2020 (Keith Springer; UBR 2020/010) was the third record from the Snares Islands (Miskelly 2001; CMM, *unpubl. data*).

##### **New Zealand dabchick (*Poliiocephalus rufopectus*)**

A pair with two large chicks at Lake Killarney, Takaka, on 21 Dec 2018 (Ken George; UBR 2019/002); one at Nelson oxidation ponds 1 on 7 Jun 2019 (Maria Clement; UBR 2019/064), with four there on 30 May 2020 (Peter and Charmaine Field; UBR 2020/054); one at Lake Elterwater, Marlborough, on 13 Jul 2019 (Maria Clement; UBR 2019/063); one (possibly two) at Pegasus Wetlands, North Canterbury, on 6 May 2020 (Bev Alexander; UBR 2020/051); one at Appleby Hills dam, Ridgeview Rd, Tasman, on 12, 14 & 27 Jun 2020 (Peter and Charmaine Field; UBR 2020/065); one at St Annes Lagoon, Cheviot, on 11 Oct 2020 (Nick Allen; UBR 2020/093).

New Zealand dabchicks are widespread in the North Island and have a small recently established population in the Nelson and Marlborough regions (Miskelly *et al.* 2019, and sightings reported above). They are no longer reportable in Marlborough, Nelson, and Golden Bay.

**Australasian little grebe (*Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*)**

One at Hands Road, Charleston, West Coast, on 20 May 1979 (Derek Onley; UBR 2019/040); one at Lake Mangamahoe, Taranaki, on 31 Dec 2018 (Tony Green; UBR 2019/030) and 22 May 2019 (Simon Nicholas; UBR 2019/038); one at Millwater, Auckland, on 1 Jul 2019 (Patricia Burgess; UBR 2019/051), one at Haldon boat harbour, Lake Benmore, Canterbury, on 29 Sep 2020 (Nick Allen; UBR 2020/091). This rare breeding species is resident in Northland and North Auckland; however, it is rarely reported south of Auckland city (Beauchamp 2019; Miskelly *et al.* 2019).

**Fiordland crested penguin (*Eudyptes pachyrhynchus*)**

One at Gore Bay, North Canterbury, on 10 Jan 2020 (Anita Spencer; UBR 2020/013).

**Erect-crested penguin (*Eudyptes sclateri*)**

One on Rangatira Island, Chatham Islands, on 26 Jan 2019 (Bridget Makan; UBR 2019/020). One on Mangere Island, Chatham Islands on 7 & 16 Feb 2019 (Bridget Makan; UBR 2019/021, Hamish Spencer, UBR 2019/019 respectively). One at Timaru port breakwater on 19 Feb 2020 (David Pease; UBR 2020/045). Erect-crested penguins breed on the Bounty and Antipodes Islands, with at least one bird reported moulting on the east coast of the South Island and on the Chatham Islands during January–March most years (Miskelly *et al.* 2019).

**Yellow-eyed penguin (*Megadyptes antipodes*)**

One at Kaikoura Peninsula 5 Nov 2017 (Nicholas Allen; UBR 2020/037), and again on 19 Feb 2020 (Roger McLean; UBR 2020/024) were north of their usual range (Marchant & Higgins 1990).

**Australasian gannet (*Morus serrator*)**

One at Flowerpot Bay, Pitt Island, Chatham Islands, 16 Feb 2019 (UBR 2019/017). Possibly the same bird was seen at Waitangi Bay, Chatham Island, on 17 Feb 2019 (UBR 2019/018; both records by Hamish Spencer). There are at least 14 previous records from the Chatham Islands (Miskelly *et al.* 2006).

**Stewart Island shag (*Leucocarbo chalconotus*)**

Four records from Ashburton River mouth, South Canterbury: 26 Mar 2019 (1 bird; UBR 2019/027), 25 Mar 2020 (1 bird; UBR 2020/072), 21 Jul 2020 (4 birds; UBR 2020/071), and 17 Jun 2020 (1 bird; UBR 2020/073). Two records from Timaru Harbour on 21 Apr 2019 (1 bird; UBR 2020/070) and 8 Aug 2019 (3

birds; UBR 2020/075). One at Damon's Bay, Banks Peninsula, on 29 Oct 2020 (UBR 2020/095). See Crossland (2021) for further detail. Stewart Island shags are no longer reportable south of Banks Peninsula on the South Island.

**Banded rail (*Gallirallus philippensis*)**

Three at Pauatahanui Wildlife Reserve, Porirua, Wellington, on 7 Jan 2019 (Imogen Warren; UBR 2019/001). There were two records of single birds at this site in 2018 (Miskelly *et al.* 2019).

**Marsh crake (*Porzana pusilla*)**

One north of Waikato Stream, Te Whanga Lagoon, Chatham Island, on 22 Sep 2019 (Peter de Lange; UBR 2019/073) was the 3<sup>rd</sup> record from the Chatham Islands (Miskelly *et al.* 2006).

**Black-fronted dotterel (*Elseya melanops*)**

An adult at Horseshoe Beach, Stewart Island, on 14 Oct 2019 (Matt Jones; UBR 2019/080) was the first record from Stewart Island.

**Subantarctic skua (*Catharacta antarctica*)**

One off Foxton Beach, Manawatu, on 12 Jun 2020 (Imogen Warren; UBR 2020/063). Within the New Zealand region, subantarctic skuas breed on the Chatham Islands and the subantarctic islands, with a few in Fiordland and the Stewart Island region (Higgins & Davies 1996).

**Black noddy (*Anous minutus*)**

One at Milford Beach, Auckland, on 6 Jan 2020 (Brian Kuan; UBR 2020/012); one at sea, between the Cavalli Islands and Mahinapua, on 12 Jun 2020 (John Rowe; UBR 2020/066). Within the New Zealand region, black noddies breed only on the Kermadec Islands (Veitch *et al.* 2004). There are five previous accepted records from the mainland (CMM, *unpubl. data*).

**White tern (*Gygis alba*)**

Two found dead on the Otaki coast, Horowhenua, on 11 Jun 2019 (Hugh Robertson; UBR 2019/072); one found dead on the Mangamuka Hut track Kaimai Range, western Bay of Plenty, on 21 May 2020 (John Heaphy; UBR 2020/058). There are about 15 previous New Zealand records away from the Kermadec Islands (Miskelly *et al.* 2017).

**Sooty tern (*Onychoprion fuscata*)**

One at Rangaunu Harbour, Far North, on 13 Nov 2020 (Phil Hammond; UBR 2020/098). One taken

into care at Onetangi Beach, Waiheke Island, on 26 Nov 2020 (Karen Saunders and Jemma McLean; UBR 2020/101) subsequently died and is now a study skin in Auckland War Memorial Museum (LB15823). Within the New Zealand region, sooty terns breed only on the Kermadec Islands, with at least 12 previous records from elsewhere in the region (Veitch *et al.* 2004; CMM, *unpubl. data*).

**Fairy tern (*Sternula nereis davisae*)**

A colour-banded (1<sup>st</sup>-year female) at Manawatu River estuary on 19 Dec 2020 (Imogen Warren; UBR 2020/110) was 488 km south of its banding site at Mangawhai, Northland.

**Barbary dove (*Streptopelia risoria*)**

Three at Bottle Lake Forest, North Canterbury, on 18 Sep 2020 (Christian Cosgrove; UBR 2020/096). Barbary doves are no longer reportable on the North and South Islands.

**Red-crowned parakeet (*Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae*)**

One at Waiatarua, West Auckland, on 26 May 2020 (Willem van Straten; UBR 2020/056).

**Fernbird (*Bowdleria punctata*)**

A pair at Lake Wainono, South Canterbury, on 28 Sep 2020 (Nick Allen; UBR 2020/092) was the first record from Canterbury since c.1905 (Holdaway & Worthy 2008).

**Records not accepted, or held in suspense**

Some of the following records may have been genuine, but were insufficiently documented to be accepted by the Records Appraisal Committee. At least 15 were considered to be misidentifications.

**Tasmanian (shy) mollymawk (*Thalassarche cauta cauta*)**

Single birds photographed off Kaikoura on 20 Mar 2019 (UBR 2019/028) and west of Codfish Island on 11 Mar 2020 (UBR 2020/030) were probably this subspecies. However, the variation in bill colour of white-capped mollymawks (*T. c. steadi*) reported by Tennyson (2020) at their main breeding colony on Disappointment Island, Auckland Islands, has cast doubt on whether these two subspecies can be reliably distinguished at sea.

**Great-winged petrel (*Pterodroma macroptera macroptera*)**

Two reported off Otago Peninsula on 29 Jun 2017 (UBR 2020/088).

**Chatham Island taiko (*Pterodroma magentae*)**

Four reported at sea out from Otago Harbour, on 4 Mar 1997 (UBR 2019/012) were considered more likely to have been distant Hutton's shearwaters (*Puffinus huttoni*).

**Fiji petrel (*Pseudobulweria macgillivrayi*)**

One reported north of the Three Kings Islands on 17 Mar 2019 (UBR 2019/067).

**Pink-footed shearwater (*Ardenna creatopus*)**

One reported in Cook Strait on 30 Apr 2019 (UBR 2019/035).

**Darter (*Anhinga melanogaster*)**

One reported from Mangere, Auckland, on 2 Jan 2019 (UBR 2019/004) was likely to have been a misidentified shag.

**Pacific heron (*Ardea pacifica*)**

Six reported at Takaka River estuary on 6 Oct 1946 (UBR 2020/047).

**Reef heron (*Egretta sacra*)**

One reported from Rangatira Island, Chatham Islands, on 16 Feb 2020 (UBR 2020/022) may be a hybrid between a reef heron and a white-faced heron (*E. novaehollandiae*) (see Thomas 2020). This is likely the same individual considered to have been a juvenile white-faced heron by Miskelly *et al.* (2017).

**Heron sp.**

A 'black heron', photographed distantly at Waimauku, North Auckland, on 31 Aug 2019 (UBR 2019/068), was most likely a black shag (*Phalacrocorax carbo*).

**White ibis (*Threskiornis molucca*)**

One reported at Lake Elterwater, Marlborough, on 7 Dec 2019 (UBR2020/005), was considered more likely to have been a juvenile royal spoonbill (*Platalea regia*).

**Yellow-billed spoonbill (*Platalea flavipes*)**

Reports of eight, Opunake, Taranaki, on 20 Nov 2019 (UBR 2019/089), two at Lost Lagoon, Westport, on 22 Apr 2020 (UBR 2020/042), and one at Ashwick Flat, Fairlie, 3 Aug 2020 (UBR 2020/074), are all likely to have been of royal spoonbills.

**White-bellied sea eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*)**

One reported to have been photographed in flight

near Miranda on 5 Nov 2017 (UBR 2020/044) was identified from the image as a spur-winged plover (*Vaniellus miles*).

**Black kite (*Milvus migrans*)**

One reported near Kaikoura, on 22 Dec 2019 (UBR 2020/007).

**Nankeen kestrel (*Falco cenchroides*)**

One reported near the Hibiscus Coast Highway, Auckland, in summer 2001 (UBR 2019/047).

**Common greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*)**

One reported at Yarrs Bay, Lake Ellesmere, Canterbury, on 30 Dec 2019 (UBR 2020/019).

**Lesser sand plover (*Charadrius mongolus*)**

One reported at Manawatu River estuary on 22 Jan 2019 (UBR2019/007).

**Subantarctic skua (*Catharacta antarctica*)**

A large skua reported off Kaikoura Peninsula on 26 Sep 2016 (UBR 2019/081) was probably a subantarctic skua.

**Fairy tern (*Sternula nereis davisae*)**

Three reported from Porirua Harbour, Wellington, on 6 Jan 2019, were identified from a photograph as white-fronted terns (*Sterna striata*) (UBR 2019/015).

**Gull-billed tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*)**

One photographed distantly at Harmers Beach, Kaikoura, on 2 Oct 2019 (UBR 2019/079) was likely to have been a Caspian tern (*Hydroprogne caspia*).

**White-winged black tern (*Chlidonias leucopterus*)**

One reported from Onoke Spit, south Wairarapa, on 6 Feb 2019 (UBR 2019/011) was identified from a photograph as a juvenile black-fronted tern (*C. albobristatus*).

**Common tern (*Sterna hirundo*)**

One reported at Halfmoon Bay, Stewart Island, 23 Jan 2019 (UBR 2019/024), was probably a 1<sup>st</sup>-year white-fronted tern (*Sterna striata*). One reported at Ashley River estuary, North Canterbury, on 7 Mar 2020 (UBR 2020/039).

**Kakariki (*Cyanoramphus* sp.)**

Four reported at Puketi Forest, Northland, on 6 Aug 2020 (UBR 2020/078).

**Fan-tailed cuckoo (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*)**

One reported at Nikau Valley, Paraparaumu, on 20 Nov 2019 (UBR 2019/088).

**Barn owl (*Tyto alba*)**

Several reports of possible barn owls were considered to be misidentifications of other species, or contained too little information to allow verification: two at Staveley, Canterbury, on 16 Jan 2019 (UBR 2019/005); one at Lyttelton on 21 Apr 2020 (UBR 2020/043); one at New Lynn, Auckland, on 29 Apr 2020 (UBR 2020/046); one at Pokeno, South Auckland, on 19 Oct 2019 (UBR 2020/060); and one at Charteris Bay, Lyttelton, on 5 Aug 2020 (UBR 2020/076).

**South Island kokako (*Callaeas cinerea*)**

Single birds reported at Waikawa, Picton, on 23 Jun 1997 (UBR 2019/076), Cable Bay, Nelson 25 Feb 2016 (UBR 2019/075) and Oct 2018 (UBR 2019/074), and Harwoods Hole, Abel Tasman National Park, on 13 Oct 2017 (UBR 2019/078).

**South Island saddleback (*Philesturnus carunculatus*)**

One reported at Point Elizabeth Walkway, Greymouth, on 18 Jan 2020 (UBR 2020/018), and one reported at Travis Wetland, Christchurch, on 30 Jun 2019 (UBR 2019/050).

**Mohua (*Mohoua ochrocephala*)**

One reported in open habitat at Diamond Lakes, Wanaka, on 9 Feb 2020 (UBR 2020/021).

**White-winged triller (*Lalage tricolor*)**

Sound recording from Secretary Island, Fiordland, 15 Mar 2019 (UBR 2019/060; withdrawn).

**Masked woodswallow (*Artamus personatus*)**

One reported from Waimarama, Waikato, on 8 Jul 2019 (UBR 2019/061) was identified from a photograph as a black-faced cuckoo-shrike (see UBR 2019/086).

**Australian tree martin (*Petrochelidon nigricans*)**

Six reported at Battle Hill Park, Pauatahanui, Porirua, on 27 Jan 2019 (UBR 2019/009) were considered likely to have been juvenile welcome swallows (*Hirundo neoxena*).

**Records of species not requiring RAC verification**

Two bobwhite quail (*Colinus virginianus*) at

Kaikoura on 14 May 2019 (UBR 2019/044), and an Australian king parrot (*Alisterus scapularis*) at One Tree Hill/Cornwall Park, Auckland, on 6 Sep 2016 (UBR 2020/032) and 25 Oct 2019 (UBR 2019/085) had probably escaped or been released from captivity.

## DISCUSSION

The Records Appraisal Committee received 193 Unusual Bird Reports between January 2019 and December 2020. Excluding two reports of 'non-reportable' species, 149 of 191 submitted UBRs were accepted (78%). This compares with an acceptance rate of 81% for 722 submissions over the previous decade (Miskelly *et al.* 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2019). The number of UBRs received during 2019–20 (8.0 month<sup>-1</sup>) was the second highest reporting rate in the history of the reporting scheme, but was lower than the record high of 9.2 month<sup>-1</sup> received during 2017–18 (Miskelly *et al.* 2019).

The most notable records assessed during 2019–20 were the addition of two further taxa to the New Zealand list (collared petrel and rose-crowned fruit-dove), and the first recorded breeding by gull-billed tern. The South Polar skua collected on the Auckland Islands in 1904 becomes the earliest accepted record of a species that has been reported from New Zealand about 20 times since (Miskelly 2020a).

The nearest known breeding colonies of collared petrel to New Zealand are in Fiji (confirmed on Gau Island, and suspected on Kadavu, Moala, Koro, Totoya, and Matuku Islands; O'Brien *et al.* 2016). Birds from these colonies have not been tracked to determine where they forage during the breeding season. They may yet prove to be regularly present in northern New Zealand waters. Rose-crowned fruit-doves occur in rainforests of eastern Australia as far south as northern New South Wales, and are seasonal migrants in the southern part of their range (Higgins & Davies 1996; Menkhurst *et al.* 2017). The bird captured off the Taranaki coast in August 2019 was a recent fledgling that was still growing its main flight feathers. (Miskelly 2020b).

The Australian subspecies of gull-billed tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica macrotarsa*) is the only form of the species recognised from New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2013). It breeds colonially on ephemeral inland lakes and wetlands in Australia (Higgins & Davies 1996; Menkhurst *et al.* 2017). The first New Zealand breeding record reported herein was close to the locality of the first reported sighting of this species in the country 64 years earlier (McKenzie 1955).

The addition of collared petrel and rose-crowned fruit-dove increases the number of bird species recorded naturally from New Zealand since AD 1800 to 355 (Gill *et al.* 2010; Miskelly *et al.* 2019). Of these, 15 are considered extinct. In addition, 36 introduced species are currently considered

established in the wild in New Zealand, making the current avifauna 376 species (including 26 migrant species and 141 vagrant species).

Northern shoveler was the most reported species during 2019–20. This followed an exceptional incursion of this species that began in late 2017 (Miskelly *et al.* 2019). Declining reports over time suggest that the birds reported in 2019 (7) and 2020 (2) were survivors from the 2017–18 incursion. Other species reported in exceptional numbers in 2019–20 included two species of swifts. The four reports of fork-tailed swifts from three locations between December 2019 and October 2020 was the highest reporting rate for this species in a 12-month period (they were reported from two locations in 1983; Fennell 1983), and the 80+ white-throated needletails at Upper Moutere in February 2020 was the second largest flock of this species recorded in New Zealand (McCaskill 1943).

Of the 53 vagrant species accepted by the RAC in 2019–20, 21 species (39.6%) were holarctic breeding migrants (12 Eurasian, 2 North American, 7 either), 18 species (34.0%) breed in Australia, 4 species were probably from the tropical Pacific, three species were from the South Atlantic Ocean, and two species (Juan Fernandez petrel and pink-footed shearwater) were from Chile. Single species arrived from Antarctica (South Polar skua), Macquarie Island (royal penguin), south-east Asia (fork-tailed swift), the southern Indian Ocean or South Atlantic (macaroni penguin), and North or Central America (laughing gull). This continues the pattern of Holarctic migratory species, followed by Australian species, being the main sources of vagrant bird records in New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2017).

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