



THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND (Inc)

Wellington OSNZ—Birds New Zealand

March 2022

www.birdsnz.org.nz and www.notornis.org.nz

Greetings

I hope you are all well and have escaped the worst of the Covid epidemic. Fortunately birding offers great opportunities for social distancing. The summer of 2021/22 has offered some wonderful opportunities for encountering new and unusual birds.

Wellington, often looked down upon by outsiders as not a top birding destination in New Zealand has produced some fascinating birds this summer. A comprehensive summary of sightings of rare and unusual birds has been included in the March issue of the Birds New Zealand magazine.

Geoff de Lisle

Wellington Birds New Zealand Monthly Meetings

Meetings are held on the first Monday of the month starting at 7.45pm. In the latter half of 2021 due to Covid restrictions meetings were only hosted on Zoom. This arrangement will continue until further notice.

Member's Night – short talks. Monday 14th of February

Ian Armitage gave a short presentation on the upcoming Pauatahanui Survey (see below).

Johannes Fischer, gave an introduction to the new study on titi on Kapiti and Mana Islands. While both islands are mammalian-predator free, weka on Kapiti island are predating titi.

Geoff de Lisle, gave a short talk on a ruru/morepork occupied nest box (see below).

Annemieke Hendriks, summarised her volunteer work with the black stilt/kaki in the McKenzie basin.

Stuart Nicholson recited his poem on the travels of godwits.

Kerrie Lukies, (Northern New Zealand Seabird Trust). Monday 7th of March

Kerrie summarised the major points arising from her extensive literature review on "The impact of sedimentation on coastal birds in Aotearoa New Zealand". *In Aotearoa New Zealand, sedimentation is the third highest scoring threat to coastal marine habitats and, until recently, the only one that could be impacted by activities governed by the Resource Management Act (RMA) 1991.* The full report can be found on the following link,

https://scholar.google.co.nz/scholar?q=Impact+of+sedimentation+on+coastal+birds+in+aotearoa+New+Zealand&hl=en&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholar

April Meeting, Monday 4th.

Speaker: Annemieke Hendriks (Banding Office, Department of Conservation)

Topic: From the Field to FALCON: A closer look at the NZ banding scheme.

Summary: New Zealand has a rich history of bird banding, with some notable long-term monitoring and conservation projects. This talk will describe a brief history of banding in NZ, how to be involved with banding and how to report band sightings online. "Every band tells a story" and we have plenty of bands (and stories) to delve into. You can access the meeting on **Monday 4th April 2022 from 7.40 pm**

via: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88283467816?pwd=K1o3UEd2M2FEV3VhTGZqMIUxdTJkQT09>

Regional Representative: **Johannes Fischer** birds.wellington@birdsnz.org.nz

Regional Recorder: Peter Hodge peter.hodge@gmail.com

Pauatahanui Survey: Ian Armitage ian.armitage@xtra.co.nz

Continuing the Bird Survey of Pauatahanui Inlet, Porirua Harbour

An invitation to help with counts between 2022 and 2024

Members of Birds New Zealand/the Ornithological Society of NZ have counted birds in Pauatahanui Inlet, the north-eastern arm of Porirua Harbour, for 30 years commencing in 1982. Counts were made each month in two-year blocks:

1982-84 1992-94 2002-04 2012-14

Aim: To monitor, record and report on changes in the occurrence and populations of birds in Pauatahanui Inlet.

What have we learned from the 1982 to 2014 counts? 35 wetland, estuarine and oceanic bird species have been recorded, listed below.

Coot, Australian	Heron, Reef	Shag, Pied
Dabchick, NZ	Heron, White-faced	Shelduck, Paradise
Dotterel, Banded	Kingfisher, Sacred	Shoveler, Australasian
Duck, Grey	Mallard x Grey Duck (hyb)	Spoonbill, Royal
Gannet, Australasian	Oystercatcher, Pied	Stilt, Pied
Godwit, Bar-tailed	Oystercatcher, Variable	Swan, Black
Goose, domestic	Pukeko	Teal, Grey
Goose, Canada	Plover, Spur-winged	Tern, Caspian
Gull, Black-backed	Shag, Black	Tern, Crested
Gull, Black-billed	Shag, Little	Tern, Black-fronted
Gull, Red-billed	Shag, Little black	Tern, Little
	Shag, Spotted	Tern, White-fronted

Several other species are known to have visited the inlet but have not been included in these surveys.

In addition, **22 land-bird species have been recorded, as follows:**

Australian magpie	Goldfinch	Skylark
Bellbird	Greenfinch	Song thrush
Blackbird	Grey warbler	Starling
California quail	House sparrow	Swamp harrier
Chaffinch	Pipit	Tui
Dunnock	Redpoll	Welcome swallow
Eastern rosella	Rock pigeon	
Fantail	Silvereye	

It is important that the series of bird counts at Pauatahanui Inlet should continue to build on the knowledge gained over 30 years. With this in mind, ***members are invited to contribute to another series of counts commencing in April 2022 and running until March 2024.***

Please contact Ian Armitage (who will coordinate this series of counts).

The methodology is straightforward.

- ◆ Counts are made on the first **Sunday** on each month, commencing on 3rd April 2022 and concluding on 3rd March 2024 (24 counts). As far as possible counts are made over mid to low tide periods, meaning that start times will vary from month to month depending on the state of the tide.
- ◆ Pauatahanui Inlet is **divided into six sections**; each section can be surveyed by one or more counters. Counts can be completed within two hours, sometimes less. All shorelines are easily accessible. A pathway now runs along all of the northern shoreline (mostly beside Grays Road) so it is more convenient to walk here than in the past.
- ◆ A **map** and **written instructions** describing the section borders will be provided; the instructions need to be read carefully and in conjunction with the map.
- ◆ **Counts are recorded** on a form (to be provided) that can be scanned and emailed, or your field records can be transcribed onto the form on your computer and then emailed.
- ◆ **Dates and start times** for surveys in **2022**.
 3 April (9 am), 1 May (8.30 am), 5 June (10 am), 3 July (9 am),
 7 August (10.30 am), 4 September (10 am), 2 October (10.30 am),
 6 November (12.30 pm), 4 December (11 am).
- ◆ Meet at the **Grays Road carpark, Pauatahanui** (20 metres from the Paekakariki Hill road intersection) 15 minutes before the survey time. Sections will be allocated, have a chat, then spread out to enjoy making counts. These surveys have always been popular with members.
- ◆ **Email your counts** to Ian Armitage, ian.armitage@xtra.co.nz

New Zealand Bird Atlas 

Wellington Region*
Summary (till 30th March 2022)

Total squares	105		
Total Checklists	31,096	Average checklists / square	296.2
Atlasers	327		
Species observed	139		

*Includes the Wairarapa and Wellington regions.

Great progress has been made but there is still a need to ensure all major habitats in each square are surveyed at least once in the four different seasons. There is also an ongoing need to specifically search for cryptic species such as marsh crake, spotless crake and fernbird.



Kakapo Recovery Facebook

While many may have concerns about social media and Facebook, the Kakapo Recover Facebook site is providing a fascinating up-to-date summary of the 2021-22 breeding season. A huge rimu mast has been predicted for Whenua Hou (Codfish) and Pukenui (Anchor) islands which will provide food for a bumper crop of chicks. Kakapo are also present on Te Kakahu (Chalky Island). Progress of the breeding season is summarised on the fridge door of Whenua Hou. The picture (left) summarises the results of the breeding season on the 7th of March. By the 14th of March 60 chicks had hatched and 57 were still alive.

<https://www.facebook.com/KakapoRecovery/>

One of the features of the Kakapo Recovery Facebook are the pictures drawn by Sarah Maybe Little who describes herself as a full-time DOC ranger and part time illustrator. The above is an example of one of her illustrations a drawing of volunteer Jenni being surprised at a feed station by an amorous football-shaped Sinbad. Sarah has recently designed a t-shirt as a fund raiser for the Kakapo Recovery programme. Her Facebook page is well worth a visit. In addition to Sarah's kakapo illustrations she has also used her talents to illustrate the Whenua Hou diving petrel.

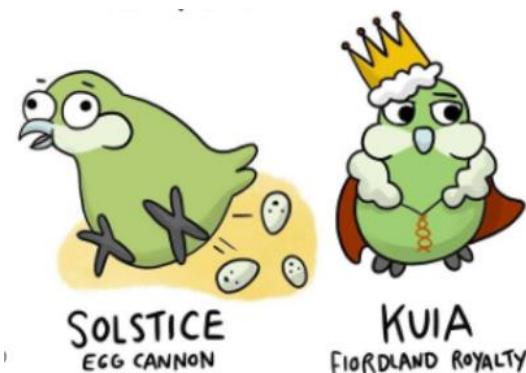
<https://www.facebook.com/sarahmaybelittle>

Andrew Digby's Twitter Feed

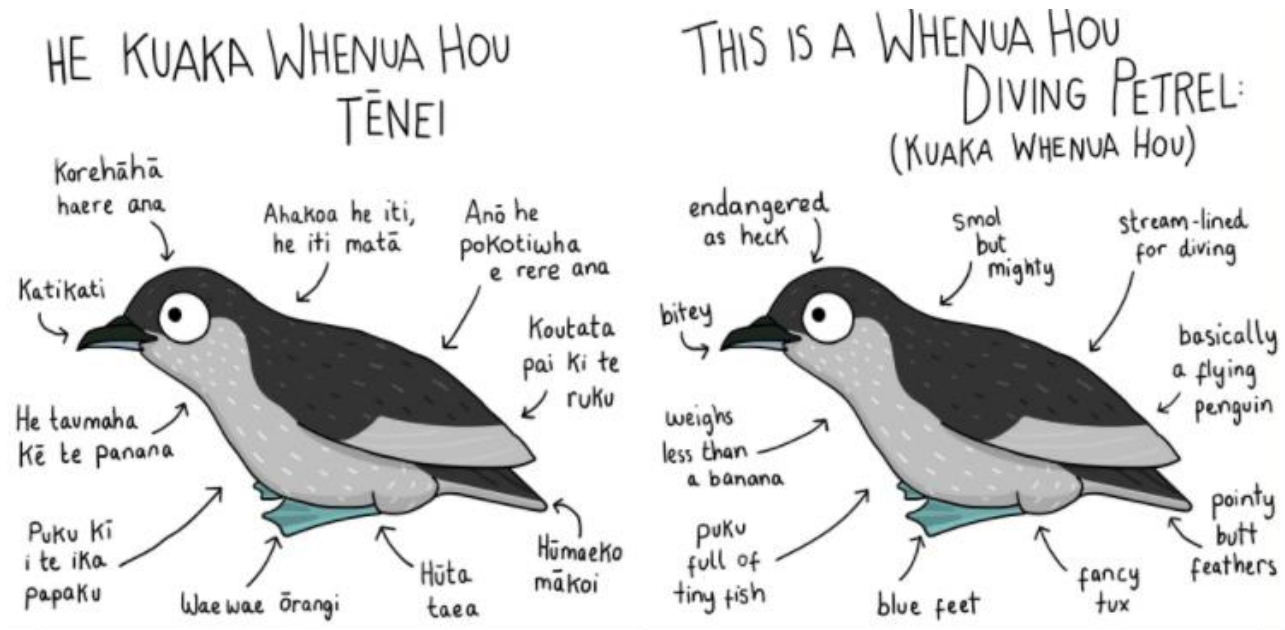
Andrew Digby a DOC Conservation Biologist for Endangered Birds runs a twitter account on kakapo. The Twitter account is complementary to the Facebook page and contains some fascinating photographs and videos.-

https://twitter.com/takapodigs/?fbclid=IwAR02LAK-iqRdHxDV9xn5med_BlaZw1a6hMNkLLh3swZI83If4Ovjf6z-f-U

WHENUA HOU	PUKENUI
• ALICE ○○○○	• APARIMA ○○○○
• ARANGA ○○○○	• ATARETA ○○○○
• AWARUA ○○○○	• BOOMER ○○○○
• BELLA ○○○○	• EVOHE ○○○○
• CYN DY ○○○○	• GERTRUDE ○○○○
• ESPERANCE ○○○○	• HAU TURI ○○○○
• HAKATERE ○○○○	• HINE TAUMAI ○○○○
• HĒRA	• JEM ○○○○
• JEAN	• JEMMA ○○○○
• KUIHI ○○○○	• KŌNINI ○○○○
• MA-MA ○○○○	• KUIA ○○○○
• NORA ○○○○	• MARAMA ○○○○
• PEARL ○○○○	• MARIAN ○○○○
• POUNAMU	• RĀ ○○○○
• PURA ○○○○	• RŌHA ○○○○
• QUEENIE ○○○○	• STELLA ○○○○
• RAKIURA ○○○○	• TĪWHIRI ○○○○
• RUTH ○○○○	• TŌITIITI ○○○○
• SOLSTICE ○○○○	• WAA ○○○○
• SUE ○○○○	• WAIKAWA ○○○○
• SUZANNE ○○○○	• YASMINE ○○○○
• TĪTAPU ○○○○	TE KĀKAHU
• TOHU ○○○○	ADELAIDE
• TŪKAHA	AUMARIA
• TUMEKE ○○○○	• DUSKY ○○○○
• WEHE-PŌ ○○○○	KURA
• ZEPHYR ○○○○	MAHLI
	• MAKOREA ○○○○
	MŪKEKE
	NINIHI ○○○○
	RIMU



Critically Endangered Kuaka Whenua Hou / Whenua Hou Diving Petrel Population Soars.



Not just the Kākāpō is having a bumper season this year! The Kuaka (Whenua Hou Diving Petrel), who shares its breeding colony with Kākāpō, had their best breeding season to date! This Critically Endangered seabird only breeds on Whenua Hou (Codfish Island) and its global population numbers around ~200 adults. Or at least, so we thought! After the 2021 season, the official count is a staggering ~210 adults! That might seem like a small increase, but it is a 5% growth nonetheless. This is pretty significant for a population that has been hovering around ~200 adults since 2015. To top it off, these ~210 adults also produced ~60 fledglings instead of the usual ~55. That's almost a 10% increase in productivity! Things are looking up for the Kuaka! We don't fully understand this change in population size and productivity. The most likely explanation is that it was just a good year, as small populations, like Kuaka, tend to fluctuate naturally. Regardless, we hope that this signals an upward trend from here on! We'll learn more in the next seasons! Stay tuned

Johannes Fischer

Note, Johannes was interviewed on Radio New Zealand regarding the successful breeding season of the kuaka.

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/462708/critically-endangered-diving-petrel-population-soars>

Sarah May Little and Johannes combined a cartoon strip in Te Reo and English on the Flying Penguin.

<https://www.facebook.com/FlyingPenguinForce/photos/pcb.841340709780158/841339946446901>

Morepork / Ruru nest update

As luck would have it we were not at home when the morepork / ruru chick fledged. Fortunately we were monitoring the nest with a trail camera and managed to record the event. We first saw pictures of the chick – there was only one chick - when it appeared at the entrance to the nest on the evening of the 23rd of December. There is a video of the chick being fed at the entrance to the nest on the morning of the 24th of December. At 9.07pm on the 24th the chick takes its first flight out of the nest box to a nearby branch. The last video we have of the chick is at 5.02am on



Christmas morning excising its wings. The empty nest was clean with no nest material. Picture, screen grab from video of chick on branch just after leaving the nest. The chick has a very prominent eye reflection.

Geoff de Lisle & Dallas Bishop

Rare and Unusual Birds

The summer of 2021/22 has been a bumper year for rare and unusual birds in New Zealand. The Wellington Region was visited by three “rare” terns; a black tern, a common tern and a sooty tern. Excellent photographs of these terns are included in the March issue of the Birds New Zealand magazine. Many “out of town” birders visited the region to see our rare avian visitors, especially the black tern which is the first record of this species in New Zealand. The identities of our rare terns have yet to be verified by the **Birds New Zealand Records Appraisal Committee (RAC)**.

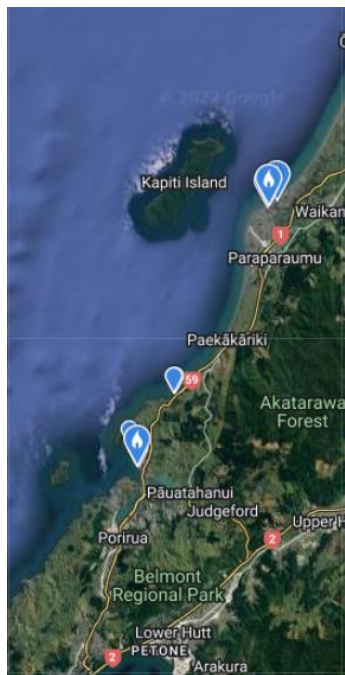
Black tern. This is the first record of a black tern in New Zealand. *The **black tern** (*Chlidonias niger*) is a small [tern](#) generally found in or near inland water in [Europe](#), [Western Asia](#) and [North America](#)* (Wikipedia). They are very rare visitors to Australia.

The Records Appraisal Committee (RAC) was established by Birds New Zealand (Birds NZ) to assess and verify unusual bird sightings reported from New Zealand. The RAC is the sole arbiter of what species will or will not appear on the New Zealand List, and advises the Birds NZ Checklist Committee, whose role it is to produce a list of birds of New Zealand that incorporates current taxonomic consensus. A new edition of the Birds New Zealand Checklist will be published this year. Records reviewed by the RAC are summarised in a database <http://rare.birds.org.nz/>.

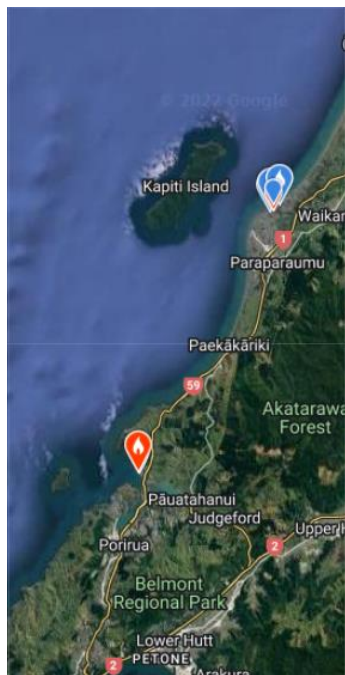
Common tern. (*Sterna hirundo subsp. longipennis*). Breeds from eastern Siberia south to China. A summer visitor to Australia. They are also probably annual visitors to New Zealand. There are 41 accepted records of common terns in the RAC database. The first positively identified common tern in New Zealand occurred in 1984 from Pukerua Bay. Common terns have been identified at the Waikanae river mouth in 2011, 2015 and 2017.
<https://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/species/common-tern>

Sooty tern. A tropical tern with global distribution. There are relatively small colonies in the Kermadec Islands. There are 13 accepted records in the RAC database which date from 1986 to 2021. Most of the records are from the upper half of the North Island. The exceptions being Chatham Islands (2021) and a dead bird from Punakaiki (1988).
<https://nzbirdsonline.org.nz/species/sooty-tern>

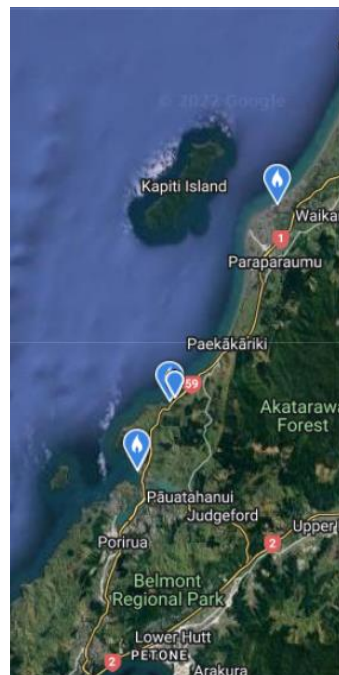
eBird Records 2022, January to March



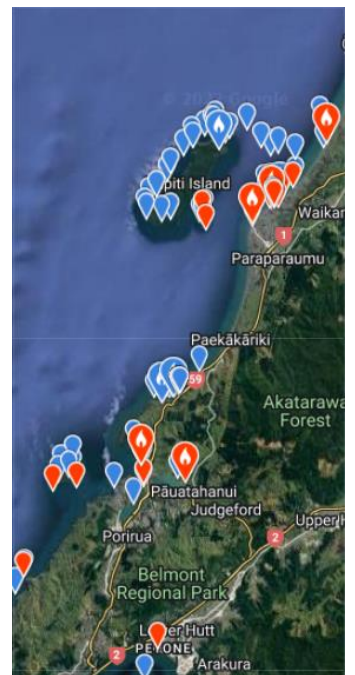
Black tern



Common tern



Sooty tern



White-fronted tern

Locations of checklists, large markers, Hot Spots; orange markers, last 30 days.

Alerts for Rare and Unusual birds

Rare and unusual birds alerts are reported on the website <https://www.birdingnz.net/>. The website is moderated by a team of very experienced birders/ornithologists. In addition to Bird Sightings and Alerts the site hosts a General Birding Discussion forum. Many of the postings on this site include photographs which are very useful for bird identification.

What are reportable species

The [List of Reportable Species](#) is constantly under review. Any species not on the reportable list, and which are not currently on the New Zealand Checklist should also be reported, as they could be potential 'first sightings' in this country. The [New Zealand Birds Online](#) website can be used to check whether a species is known to occur in New Zealand (i.e., all species on the New Zealand list have a page).

What to do if you see a rare of unusual bird

There are helpful directions on the Birds New Zealand website as to what to do if you see a rare of unusual bird <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/schemes/rare-bird-sightings/what-to-do-if-you-see-a-rare-or-unusual-bird/>. An essential part of this process is to fully document the sightings with photographs, sketches and good notes. Note, if you require assistance in compiling a Rare / Unusual Bird report do not hesitate to contact the Regional Representative. Posting the sightings on BirdingNZ.net is helpful in alerting other birders who can verify the initial observations.

Email the [Regional Representative](#) within the region the bird was seen, and post it on [BirdingNZ.net](#). If you are not a member of BirdingNZ.net or are having trouble joining, please contact [Neil Fitzgerald](#) or [Brent Stephenson](#). If you are not sure if the bird is rare or unusual for the Region/Country – please notify your Regional Representative anyway.

Rarities and unusual birds – photography & eBird

There are a growing number of keen photographers who enjoy taking pictures of rare and unusual birds. Photographs play a vital part in documenting rare and unusual birds. Birds New Zealand has a Code of Conduct for the photography of birds <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Code-of-Conduct-for-Photography-of-Birds-Guidelines.pdf> *The aim of this Code of Conduct is (a) to increase awareness of potential negative impacts that photography may have on birds, and (b) to ensure respect for the security and welfare of birds and to minimise interference to birds and to the surrounding environment during observation and photography.*

Photographers in addition to being mindful of the welfare of birds must also be aware of not interfering with the enjoyment of other birders.

A big thank you for all those who submitted complete eBird Atlas checklists that included our rare visiting terns. Photographers who are currently not using eBird are encouraged to record their observations on this website. eBird provides a great diary for recording your bird sightings and photographs. Furthermore, eBird checklists form a valuable record of bird distributions and population trends.

White-fronted and Other terns

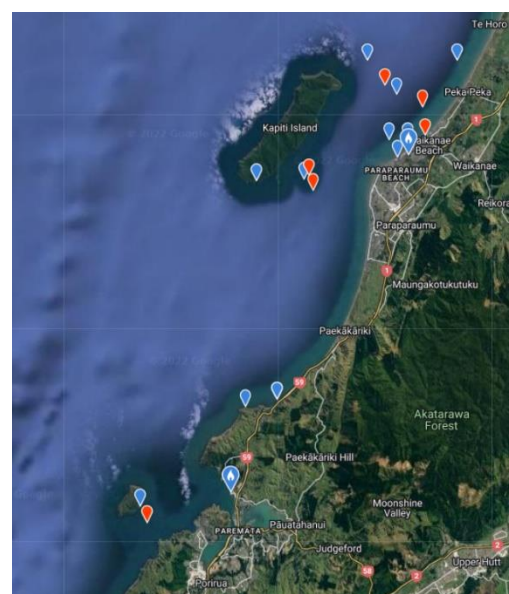
A feature of the sightings of the three rare terns was that they were always present in a large flock of white-fronted terns, either at the mouth of the Waikanae river or at Pukerura Bay. The largest number of white-fronted terns observed in the Wellington region this summer was 1510 on the estuary sandspit at the mouth of the Waikanae river on 15th of January, 2022 David Thomas for the Greater Wellington Regional Council recorded them in his eBird checklist, <https://ebird.org/atlasnz/checklist/S101099022> In his checklist he stated that “this count is correct” reflecting a systematic count. He also noted that the flock contained recently fledged young. Small numbers of black-fronted terns, a little tern and blacked-winged tern have been recorded on occasions with white-fronted tern flocks. While these three species are less common than white-fronted terns they are not included in the List of Reportable species.



On the 7th of January 2022, 144 white-fronted terns (pictured above) were nesting on the north end of Mana island next to 776 nesting red-billed gulls. The number of gulls was estimated from photographs. Dallas Bishop & Geoff de Lisle

Arctic Skua

Another bird associated with flocks of white-fronted terns and also red-billed gulls is the Arctic skua. They are circumpolar breeders in the arctic and subarctic coastal tundra and moorlands. In New Zealand they visit in our summer and the map from eBird shows the sightings of arctic skuas this year, notably at the mouth of the Waikanae river and Pukerura Bay. Both are areas where there have been large numbers of white-fronted terns. They are also occasionally found during this time of the year in Wellington harbour. Arctic skuas are opportunistic predators which harass terns and small gulls in flight to disgorge food.



Successful breeding season for NZ's rarest bird, the tara iti/fairy tern

With eight tara iti/New Zealand fairy tern expected to fledge (leave the nest), it's been the best breeding season since 2013–2014 for one of Aotearoa New Zealand's rarest birds.

With fewer than 40 adult birds, the conservation status of tara iti is Nationally Critical. Despite extensive management, the population has teetered on the brink of extinction since the 1970s.

The success this breeding season is the result of the implementation of a multi-faceted management strategy. Tara iti habitats are being improved through management of the vegetation, sand and shell. In addition there is ongoing predator control, artificial incubation of eggs and seasonal monitoring by DOC rangers and volunteers. Auckland Zoo are playing an important role in the recovery of tara iti through not only incubating eggs but also hand-rearing chicks. This year the Zoo successfully reared and released two chicks. Further information is presented in the following DOC press release

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/news/media-releases/2022-media-releases/successful-breeding-season-for-one-of-our-rarest-birds/>

https://www.stuff.co.nz/environment/300532373/successful-breeding-season-for-nzs-rarest-bird-the-tara-itifairy-tern?fbclid=IwAR0DW0hASP5HKxom9hLhOpKVc445UQuZrLQx_SoaTSHZHggrj1MksMxtmfQ

25 Years since Rats were eradicated from Kapiti Island

October 2021 marked 25 years since rats were eradicated from Kāpiti Island, making it one of the first and largest predator-free island sanctuaries. To celebrate, the operational team reunited in the old Whare on Kāpiti. Biodiversity Ranger Lee Barry thinks back to the events leading up to the declaration of Kāpiti as officially Predator Free.

The full article of the 25th Anniversary by Lee Barry (current DOC Kapiti Ranger) can be found on the DOC website, <https://blog.doc.govt.nz/2022/02/10/how-the-kapiti-island-rat-eradication-almost-didnt-happen/#comments>

“The architect of the mission was Raewyn Empson, a Threatened Species Officer for DOC’s Wellington Conservancy.” Raewyn is a long-standing Wellington member of Birds New Zealand (OSNZ). Notably, Raewyn joined the Zealandia team on secondment from DOC in late 1998. Her 16 years at Zealandia saw it become a pioneer and model for fenced sanctuaries in New Zealand.



The Wellington branch of Birds New Zealand in collaboration with DOC and landowners at Waiorua in 2021 began a 3-year block of counts on Kapiti Island. These continue a series of counts that started on the island in the 1970s and should reveal ongoing recovery of the bird population since the eradication of rats in 1996.

Bird Snippets

Common tern at Waikanae

Alan Tennyson » Mon Jan 24, 2022

1 at the Waikanae Spit today with the white-fronteds - seen by a bunch of people looking for the black tern. BirdingNZ.net

Yellow-crowned parakeet, Korokoro, Lower Hutt

Colin Miskelly » Sat Jan 29, 2022

Great views of an adult male about 100 m north of the Oakleigh St carpark (Belmont Regional Park). It was very responsive to 'squeaking'. The nearest thriving population is on Mana Island (14 km northwest, with a lot of land in between), although there are a few on the other side of the Hutt Valley (Remutaka Forest Park and Wainuiomata water catchment). Most of the kākārīki around Wellington are red-crowned (introduced to Matiu/Somes Island and Zealandia).

Other good birds on the Korokoro dam / Belmont trig loop included 4 groups of whiteheads (including one flock of at least 7), 2 bellbirds, 2 tomtits, and a male falcon passing a food item to a juvenile female in flight.

Bellbirds and whiteheads from Kapiti Island have been introduced to Mana Island and Zealandia, and I am familiar with their dialects at all three sites. I was intrigued to note that Belmont whiteheads sound different, while bellbirds there have the same dialect as Kapiti. Full lists loaded on NZ Bird Atlas/eBird. BirdingNZ.net

Long-tailed cuckoo, Mangaone walkway, Kaitawa Reserve

Jan Keast 2nd Oct, 2022 (eBird)

Nikki McArthur 19th February, 2022 (eBird)

Long-tailed cuckoo, Orongorongo

Allan Munro, 16th Feb, 2022 (eBird)

East Whakanui track. One calling overhead. After several minutes it was answered by another, more distant, cuckoo.

Shining cuckoo, Mana Island

Dallas Bishop, 24th Feb, 2022

Seen near wetland (eBird).

Black-fronted tern, Plimmerton

Michael Szabo » Thu Feb 24, 2022

One immature Black-fronted Tern seen today with c100 WFTs at the rocks behind the fire station at 1pm. No sign of the Black Tern, Sooty Tern or Common Tern during a brief stop there. There was also a flock of c700 WFTs on the rocks off the Pukerua Bay pull-off car park about 20 minutes before that but nothing else of note during a brief stop there too. BirdingNZ.net. Note, there have been numerous sightings of black-fronted terns as birders went in search of rarer terns such as the black tern.

Wellington Biodiversity – Black morph fantail

Colin Miskelly » Thu Mar 03, 2022

There was an almost tailless juvenile black fantail in Prince of Wales Park (Mt Cook, Wellington) today. It had apparently lost its ail after fledging (i.e. its tail was shorter than a fledgling's). BirdingNZ.net

Colin Miskelly » Wed Mar 09, 2022

A different black morph fantail was in Prince of Wales Park (250 m from previous sighting) on 8 March. This time an adult with a full tail.

For those who know the site (in Mt Cook, Wellington) the bird seen on 3 March was along the walkway between Bell Rd and Dorking St, and the bird seen on 8 March was along the stream above the 'watercourse' and bridge. BirdingNZ.net

Davidthomas » Wed Mar 09, 2022

I had a black morph in the mixed broadleaf forest in Porirua park Porirua while doing GWRC Tier 1/2 bird counts back in January. Looked to be an adult.

Some really nice bush in there with large conifers and mixed broadleaf species. BirdingNZ.net

Colin Miskelly » Mon Mar 21, 2022

The juvenile black morph fantail with a short tail was in our backyard today (Hargreaves St, Mt Cook, Wellington). Its tail is about 2/3 full length, and noticeably longer than when we saw it on 3 March (400 m away)

This is the first time we have had one on our property, though have seen at least three black fantails in Prince of Wales Park nearby. BirdingNNZ.net

Little Tern, Waikanae sandspit

Michael Szabo » Sat Mar 19, 2022

Roger Brent Smith reports a Little Tern and several Black-fronted Terns among a flock of over 1,000 White-fronted Terns at the Waikanae Estuary sandspit today. BirdingNZ.net

Wellington City biodiversity

Iedzep » Sat Mar 19, 2022

A pair of parakeets in the trees by the changing sheds at the sports field beside Lady Norwood Rose Gardens, Botanic Gardens, about 4.45 pm Fri night. Kaka calling, NZ Pigeon flying over and a Bellbird also heard in my 2 minute walk through the botanic gardens to Tinakori Road. I recall Parakeets hanging around in trees in autumn last year or year before, same area round the playing fields. There is usually Rosella's in that area too. BirdingNZ.net

Kākārīkī, Korokoro, Lower Hutt

Colin Miskelly » Sun Mar 27, 2022

I have changed the title of this thread from 'Yellow-crowned parakeet' to 'Kākārīkī', as I saw a different species

near Korokoro Stream today. I was walking the section of track between the Stratton St and Oakleigh St entrances, and disturbed a red-crowned parakeet that was feeding on the ground under a tōtara tree (tōtara is a rare species in the catchment - probably planted). The kākārīkī flew up and perched 3 metres from me for several seconds.

The site is at a zig-zag in the track about 200 metres north of where it joins the Korokoro loop track, and is 600 metres in a straight line from where I saw a yellow-crowned parakeet on 29 January. These are the only two kākārīkī

that I have seen or heard during five hikes in Belmont Regional Park / Farm Park over the past 2 months; it is remarkable that I had great views of them both.

Red-crowned parakeet is the species I would expect to see in the hills west of Lower Hutt. Korokoro dam is 6 km from Matiu/Somes Island, and 14.5 km from Zealandia (both sites with well-established red-crowned parakeet populations following translocations in the past 1-2 decades. BirdingNZ.net

Wellington Public Transport Big Day

Byrd » Sun Jan 02, 2022

January the first. Time for my first ever attempt at a Big Day. Michael (and George Hobson) did a Wellington Big Day by public transport in 2017, ending on 62 species - see here: viewtopic.php?f=9&t=6442&p=31915&hilit - and I thought that would be a fun way to start off this year. I don't know if there have been any other attempts at a Wellington Public Transport Big Day. I couldn't find any on the forum and most people are probably just too sensible, so this could well be only the second time it has been done.

The obvious problem with doing a Big Day by public transport is that, even with the long daylight hours at this time of year, it is only possible to visit a few places because it is difficult to tie different trains and buses together in an efficient way, in addition to which on weekends and public holidays (i.e. on New Year's Day) trains and buses have much less frequent schedules than on regular weekdays.

I worked through various combinations and arrived at what I hoped was the best one for my purposes. The two main birding spots I would be hitting were (probably obviously) Zealandia for forest birds and the Waikanae Estuary area for open country and water birds. I did add in another couple of sites to the itinerary (the Pauatahanui Nature Reserve and the Keith George Memorial Park) although all the connections were pretty tight so I didn't know if I'd be able to fit everything in.

I considered using a return-trip on the harbour ferry with a hope for Little Blue Penguin, Spotted Shag, and maybe others, but I couldn't wrangle the weekend schedule into my plan - I thought I might have time for some scanning from the waterfront but didn't in the end. I also considered placing a Zealandia night-tour at the end (for Little Spotted Kiwi and Morepork) but I knew that the schedules would come undone through the course of the day and I'd probably not make it back to Zealandia in time (this turned out to be the case).

I made a list of all the birds I expected (plus hoped) to see and it came out at around 65-ish species. In the event there were, of course, several birds not seen - most of which were species I would have said were 100% guaranteed (the three most bizarre misses were probably Chaffinch, Grey Warbler and Kingfisher everywhere I went) - and I finished about ten to fifteen birds down from expected, with a total of 54 species (or 55 if Takahe at Zealandia is counted; or 57 if heard-only Chaffinch and Grey Warbler are also counted).

The species which should or could have been seen on my route but weren't because of random chance (and, yes, most of these are like "how did you not see that?!"): BirdingNZ.net

Coast / Harbour:

Fluttering Shearwater *Puffinus gavia*
Spotted Shag *Stictocarbo punctatus*

Everywhere!

Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*
Grey Warbler *Gerygone igata*

Waikanae Estuary:

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia*
Banded Dotterel *Charadrius bicinctus*
New Zealand Dotterel *Charadrius obscurus*
Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*
Sacred Kingfisher *Todiramphus sanctus*
Skylark *Alauda arvensis*

Ring-necked Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*
Waimanu Lagoon:
Australasian Shoveler *Anas rhynchotis*
Little Black Shag *Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*



Te Papa Blogs

Spotlighting the most boring creatures in Te Taiao | Nature

Caitlin McLean, Science Communication intern, 2nd Feb, 2022

“It’s probably no surprise that the least popular species in Te Taiao | Nature are unexceptional birds, drab fish, and obscure insects. Science communication intern Caitlin McLean was given the challenge of sharing the stories of these under-loved creatures and why we should still care.”

“You might be wondering how we know which creatures in Te Taiao | Nature are the ‘least-popular’. Throughout the exhibition spaces there are touch screens with pictures of the animals on display, and we’re able to pull the data on how often each species is viewed.

I dived into this story by researching the least-popular bird, the grey-faced petrel. Honestly, if you were going to describe the most generic-looking bird you’d probably describe the grey-faced petrel. It’s is not particularly large or small, it’s not colourful, it doesn’t have a special call, and it’s not endangered.” Note, On first glance this blog may ruffle the odd feather of seabird specialists. However, Caitlin reminds us “to love nature simply because it exists, not because it meets the human idea of ‘interesting’ or provides some service to us”

<https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2022/02/02/spotlighting-the-most-boring-creatures-in-te-taiao-nature/>

East Harbour Banded Dotterels

The East Harbour Banded Dotterel project is led by Parker Jones of MIRO, the Eastern bays conservation group. The 2021/22 breeding season has finished and the banded dotterels are now in post-breeding mode. The major change for the 2021/22 breeding season was the monitoring of banded dotterels for the first time at Baring Head. Richard Gray banded and flagged adults and chicks at Eastbourne, Lake Kohangapiripiri and also Baring Head. Since banding and flagging began in 2016/17 a total of 114 chicks, fledglings and adults have been marked. Of these 70 (adults and large chicks) have received a metal band and a flag with a unique 3 letter identifier and 44 smaller chicks have received a metal band only. The star bird is PAP which has spent the last two winters in New Caledonia. The two pictures show PAP taken in August 2020 when he was in full breeding plumage (left) and in March 2022 in non-breeding plumage.

The 2021/22 breeding season has been disappointing with only 2 chicks fledged on the Eastbourne beach and 4 at Lake Kohangapiripiri. The results were more encouraging at Baring Head with 8 chicks fledged. The cause of chick loss at Eastbourne is once again predation by a couple domestic cat (caught on camera) while at Lake Kohangapiripiri it was most likely due to predation from stoats and black-backed gulls.



PAP, breeding plumage, August



PAP, non-breeding plumage, March

The ongoing predation of banded dotterel chicks by domestic cats highlights the urgent need for effective regulations of pets so that such losses can be prevented. There is an increasing body of evidence that domestic cats are having a major impact on some native bird species such as banded dotterels.

Currently the banded dotterels at Eastbourne, Lake Kohangapiripiri and Baring Head have left their breeding grounds and many of them have gone to Lake Kohangatera, the second of the Pencarrow Lakes. In early March there were 60-70 birds at Lake Kohangatera which included flagged birds from Eastbourne, Lake Kohangapiripiri and Baring Head. A female, colour banded bird (pictured) appeared at Lake Kohangatera in early March. This bird was banded in Kaikoura as part of an extensive study run by Ailsa Howard. Information on this study is presented on the Banded Dotterel Study Kaikoura Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/BandeddotterelstudySBay/> . In recent years the Kaikoura banded dotterels have also suffered major losses from predation by domestic cats.



By late March most of the birds at Lake Kohangatera appear to have dispersed to their winter grounds. This winter a major search will be conducted in the Wairarapa to see if any of the East Harbour banded dotterels are wintering in this region. This will be a joint exercise between Wairarapa and Wellington Birds New Zealand members and MIRO.

A post-breeding flock of banded dotterels was present at Pauatahanui in early March with up to 31 birds present. They included a bird with a flag that most likely came from Eastbourne. At high tide this flock moves to paddocks beside Gray's Road.