



Birds New Zealand  
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## *Otago Region Newsletter 6/2022*

### *July 2022*

We will continue to wear face masks out of consideration for others at the indoor meetings



## Ornithological Snippets

Please send any interesting reports to [cluthaphotos@gmail.com](mailto:cluthaphotos@gmail.com) Richard Schofield

## eBird News

Further to the announcement in last month's newsletter, the spring Atlassing weekend is now planned for **Labour Weekend (21-24 October)**, with Naseby the likely base. If you are keen to come along, please let me know as soon as possible so that accommodation can be arranged.

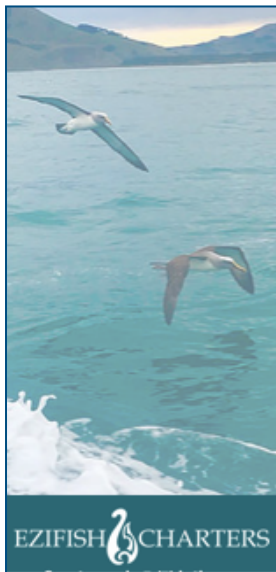
In the meantime the next monthly trip will be on **Sunday 14 August**, when we will return to Toko Mouth. Please register your intention to come in case there are any changes to the plan.

The Atlassing trip to the Lawrence area on 3 July was not oversubscribed, however Maree, Maureen and I still managed respectable coverage of 4 squares on a cloudless day with not much wind. Probably the most obvious feature of the day was the number of Blackbirds

around Beaumont, with double figure counts on several checklists, and a high of 152 in a single paddock. We also saw 40 Skylarks, but unfortunately these were in a single flock, and not evenly distributed around the 4 squares. Two views of NZ Falcon were a bonus (eating ice cream and birding at the same time is not the best idea!)

We now have only one month remaining of the penultimate winter season for fieldwork. Please check out the coverage maps if you are heading out anywhere, or contact me and I can give you some pointers.

Contact Richard 027 281 8701 or [cluthaphotos@gmail.com](mailto:cluthaphotos@gmail.com)



Spring dates for full-day pelagic trips with Ezifish Charters out of Moeraki, Otago to the offshore canyons are set for **Saturday 27th August, Sunday 28th August, Saturday 10th September, and Sunday 11th September**. There should be great opportunities for photography and viewing of a wide range of albatrosses, shearwaters, petrels, shags, penguins, whales, and dolphins.

We depart Moeraki at 8am (return by 4pm) on the 16.5 x 5m fibreglass vessel "The Sirocco". You'll need your own food, drinks and other supplies for the trip, a BBQ sausage sizzle lunch will be provided. To confirm, it is a deposit of \$150 (which is only refundable if I can fill your spot before the trip takes place). The final cost will be sorted closer to the time and depend on the number of people confirmed on the day. If the trip is cancelled due to weather then the payment will be fully refunded. The call will be made by the skipper about 48hrs ahead of the trip. If you are interested in reserving a spot or have any questions please email [oscarkokako@gmail.com](mailto:oscarkokako@gmail.com).

## BirdsNZ Otago Branch News

### A wintery adventure in Wanaka

Mary Thompson and Richard Schofield headed to Wanaka on 8 July to meet up BirdsNZ member Petrina Duncan, and give a public talk about the NZ Bird Atlas scheme, hosted by Wanaka Backyard Trapping. The talk, on the cold wintery morning of Saturday 9 July, was very informative and well received by the audience, who travelled from Wanaka, Hawea, Luggate, Tarras and even Bendigo. These included a few BirdsNZ members like local grebe expert John Darby. Mary and Richard did a great job of persuading everyone that the Atlas scheme is an important citizen science project which will have findings that can be used by scientists, councils, government and environmental groups. They also urged people who go into the backcountry to start atlassing in order to get more coverage in remote areas.



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After the talk, about a third of the audience visited the Lake Wanaka foreshore to try using the eBird app to complete bird checklists. Plenty of birds were spotted from the wharf near town. A total of 199 individuals for one of the checklists – including Mallard, NZ Scaup, Great Crested Grebe, Black-billed Gull, Little Pied Shag, European Starling, Eurasian Blackbird, House Sparrow and Chaffinch. Participants were pleased to have some experts on hand to ask questions and see how the check-listing process works on eBird.



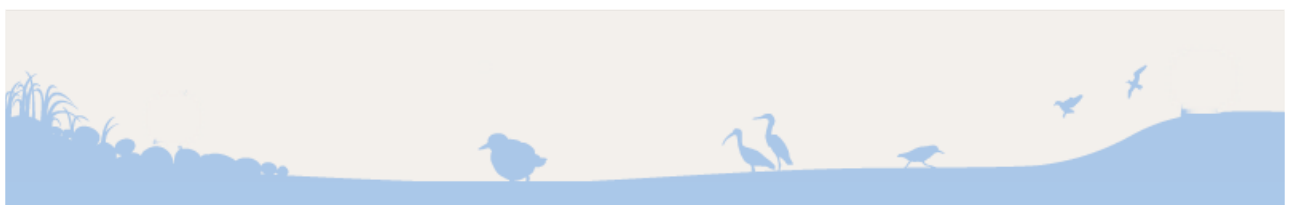
After a hearty hot lunch, Petrina took Mary and Richard for a drive up the Matukituki valley to get to an atlas square which had not yet been visited in winter. This turned into quite an unexpected adventure! Beyond the turn-off to Treble Cone ski field, the middle of the road and all the surrounding land were covered in a blanket of snow. The blanket got even thicker further up the valley and road conditions were borderline for a townie car with average clearance. However, when there's an unvisited square nearby, nothing can hold back eager birders, so of course, the target square was reached!

A total of nine checklists were completed in two different squares along the roadside. Despite all the snow, birds were aplenty, with 20 different species seen in the unvisited square and 18 in the other. Some of the highlights were: watching birds whose colouration usually sticks



out on farmland become very well camouflaged in snow (black-backed gulls, magpies), NZ Falcons, friendly Australasian Pipits, an unexpected Pied Stilt, and a pair of Black Swans floating through an icy surface on a pond. All with the backdrop of stunning mountain scenery! Richard of course had his shorts on – as per usual – which certainly kept the checklist time down. A brilliant adventure and well worth the drive.

**Mary Thompson**





## August and September

- **Outside Orokonui Robin Project** - This will be the sixth year of the project monitoring kakaruai in forest adjacent to the Ecosanctuary to ascertain whether the population is self-sustaining. Fortnightly trips will run every other Saturday (weather dependent) starting **20 August**. The main activities will be finding and monitoring nests and we will also try to band as many of the robins as we can. All ages and levels of experience are welcome, although please note that the trips can involve some off trail walking up and down slopes. If you would like to find out more about what is involved or be added to the mailing list to be kept informed about upcoming trips, then please email George: [gpickerell@outlook.com](mailto:gpickerell@outlook.com)

### **A very busy September is coming up – no need to wonder how to enjoy the spring, join Birds NZ activities!**

- Botanic Garden Birdwatching walk, 10 - 11 am Sunday **11 September**

This is an annual event when we will be guiding groups of 10 or so members of the public to help them spot and identify birds. Contact: Suzanne Middleton [smiddleton7@yahoo.co.nz](mailto:smiddleton7@yahoo.co.nz) ph 022 2601 8579 if you can help.

- Town Belt 5 minute bird counts with AAPES university students, Sunday **25 September** 10am to noon.

Birds NZ is holding a guided 5MBC along the Town Belt Bird Count Trail with student members of AAPES-the ecological student society at the university. We would really like a goodly number of us birders to come along so please diary this event and let Bruce McKinlay know if you are able to help.

- Wetland birds programme in Otago: proposal for survey and monitoring of Australasian bittern, marsh crakes and spotless crakes (in conjunction with ORC)



The ORC in conjunction with Birds NZ is planning to hold a workshop at Te Nohoaka o Tukiaua/ Sinclair Wetlands over the weekend of **17 and 18 September**. Please put this in your diaries now and plan to be involved. There will be accommodation for those who would like to stay for the weekend but daily participation is also fine. The aim of the workshop is to cover protocols for surveying and monitoring for wetland birds: active monitoring of marsh crake and spotless crake and passive monitoring of Australasian bittern with acoustic recording devices (ARDs) and to try these out at the wetlands.

Initially we will monitor Sinclair Wetlands and Lake Tuakitoto. Tasks will range from heading out to the wetlands to listen for birds and placing recording devices during spring season, then analysing the recordings at leisure throughout the year (a good winter indoor task using computer Raven software-training will be given).

## Opportunity for data entry work.

Otago Region continues to make great progress on digitising data from old notebooks and uploading them data to eBird and developing new projects.

If you are looking at the eBird maps for black fronted dotterels or cattle egret you can see the results of the work that Francie Begg and Emma Salmon completed last year. Francie and Emma worked through a notebook from George and Doreen Grant from the Taieri Plains. We have now got some more data sets which need a bit of work if you want to join in.

The first is a small data set of brown creeper records from the 1980's. These have been kindly scanned by the Hocken Library and now need to be digitised. The NZ bird Atlas Team have identified that Brown Creepers might be showing a very different pattern in this Atlas compared to the last one and so having another place specific data set available could help in interpreting this pattern.

The second which is much larger and in some ways, very different. This a notebook of Peter Childs. Not only does this have a lot of distributional data for breeding shorebirds and other in central Otago but there a large number of egg measurements. Digitising this will show where banded dotterels and other used to nest in Central Otago when Peter was busy in the field but there is also the opportunity to investigate the morphology of eggs in Central Otago at this time.

If you want to participate in this work, you will need a copy of Excel or equivalent and internet connection and a bit of spare time. Still keen, contact me at [brucejmckinlay@gmail.com](mailto:brucejmckinlay@gmail.com)

**Bruce McKinlay**

## Ross Creek nest boxes



Rifleman, Juvenile male

Oscar Thomas

We have 25 rifleman nest boxes kindly put together with the help of the North Dunedin Men's Shed and City Sanctuary, and will begin to place these around Ross Creek Reservoir next week. Rifleman start nest building in August and sometimes build several nests before they choose one to settle in (I don't think there are 25 pairs around the reserve yet, so this will give them a few options each). These will be monitored over the summer, and if you would like to be involved with this contact Oscar Thomas at [oscarkokako@gmail.com](mailto:oscarkokako@gmail.com)

## Kākāpō population at its highest in almost 50 years

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/471219/kakapo-population-at-its-highest-in-almost-50-years>





## Otago Birds NZ Branch AGM Tuesday 26 July 2022

### Annual Report of Otago Birds NZ activities, 2021-2022

#### Summary of main activities

Most meetings and field trips have continued despite covid restrictions.

Weekend field trip to Alexandra at Labour Weekend was attended by 14 people and a great success. End-of-year Quiz was enjoyable and well-attended. Global Big Day counts by about 25 members – species list highest number for NZ regions.

Meeting venue moved to Valley Project Community Rooms; zooming meetings.

Town Belt Bird Count Trail installed and launched by Mayor.

Data from our projects have been archived at Hocken and on Google Drive so now available to use by research students.

#### *Who helps keep our branch running?*

Regional Rep. Mary Thompson

Regional Recorder/Atlas coordinator: Richard Schofield

Treasurer: Sue Odlin

Advisory Group: Bruce, Nick, Sue, Richard, Graeme, Georgina, Oscar

Newsletter editor/compiler: Sue Odlin

Newsletter distribution: Hamish Spencer; Susan Schweigman

Regional Round-up for Birds NZ: Franny Cunninghame

Everyone who attends meetings, comes on field trips, and records bird sightings on eBird. 126 members.

#### *How are our finances looking?*

See annual statement.

We received payment for supply of Harbour Count data to NIWA for research.

#### *What projects do we have underway?*

Robins: Georgina Pickerell

Wader Counts: Maree Johnstone

Town Belt: Bruce McKinlay

Tomahawk Lagoon: Mary Thompson

Atlas: Richard Schofield

Wild Dunedin Festival (annual): Andrew Austin

Guided Birdwatching at Botanic Garden (annual): Suzanne Middleton

#### *Atlassing*

Funding is available to cover more remote squares.

Planning "Adventure birding" to cover remote areas.

#### *Publicity*


How can we use social media better? Should we start an Otago Birds NZ Facebook page?

Should we be more pro-active in liaising with ODT/Star about bird stories? How?

#### *What other projects or events should we embark on?*

What would you like to be involved in?

- Rifleman nest boxes in Ross Creek – nest monitoring?
- Bittern and Crake surveys of Otago wetlands in association with ORC.
- Survey Atlas squares for morepork (manual or auto recorders?)
- Beach Patrols after south easterly storms?
- End-of-year Quiz; volunteers needed.

		<b>OTAGO BRANCH</b>	
<b>Accounting Period</b>	<b>1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022</b>		
<b>Opening Balance</b>		<b>\$5,900.32</b>	
<b>Closing Balance</b>		<b>\$6,787.30</b>	
<b>INCOME</b>		<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	
<b>Particulars</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Particulars</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Interest	\$3.95	Room Hire	\$110.00
Donations (Hall Hire)	\$21.00	Speaker Gifts	\$114.89
Donations from books	\$95.00	Robin Project	\$72.75
OSNZ Capitation 2021/2022	\$700.00	Newsletter	\$72.34
Harbour Data	\$500.00	Publicity	\$33.50
		Courier/Alcohol Wipes	\$29.49
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,319.95</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$432.97</b>

**Funds committed**

Robin project	\$2,234.33
Student travel	\$260.00

**\$2,494.33****BALANCE AVAILABLE****\$4,292.97**



## Programme 2022

**Monthly Indoor Meetings** will be held on the 4<sup>th</sup> **Tuesday** at 7.30pm in the Valley Project Community Rooms, 262 North Road, NEV. Just past the primary school, with a parking area in front. Look for the NZ Falcon Mural.

The meetings will be zoomed live for those unable to attend. We welcome our members from Central Otago area and others who can't get to Dunedin, and members not so comfortable with attending meetings at this time. You can join the meetings by Zoom link. This will be emailed to members the previous evening, so check for the link.

Tuesday 26 July      Birding in the Chathams, Antipodes and other Subantarctic Islands  
Ela Hunt, Nick Beckwith and Richard Schofield.  
Followed by AGM.

Zoom Meeting link

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86872848947?pwd=Um4yUVZmVUttVlNSV1RsVXBMVFoxZz09>

Meeting ID: 868 7284 8947

Passcode: 806832

Saturday 20 August      Orokonui Robin Project please email George: [gpickerell@outlook.com](mailto:gpickerell@outlook.com)

Tuesday 23 August      Nic Rawlence  
Latest discoveries about ancient NZ birds

Sunday 11 Sept      Botanic Garden Birdwatching Walks; Birds NZ members will guides groups around the gardens spotting and identifying birds, 10 - 12 noon

Sat 17/Sun 18 Sept      Wetland Birds Workshop at Te Nohoaka o Tukiaua/Sinclair Wetlands

Sunday 25 Sept      Birds NZ is holding a guided 5MBC along the Town Belt Bird Count Trail with student members of AAPES 10 - 12 noon.

Tuesday 27 Sept      Bruce McKinlay  
Town Belt Bird Survey findings

21 - 24 Oct      Spring Atlassing weekend - Naseby area

**Suggestions of locations for field trips and atlassing trips, and offers to help lead trips would really be appreciated, please contact Mary [birds.otago@birds.nz.org.nz](mailto:birds.otago@birds.nz.org.nz)**

Please send all contributions for the June newsletter to: Sue Odlin [sodlin@gmail.com](mailto:sodlin@gmail.com)

Final date for copy for next newsletter: **16 August**