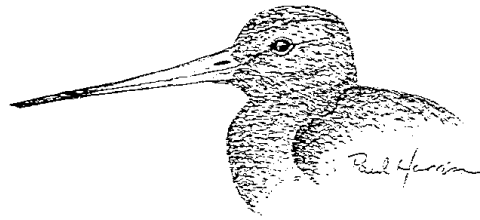


KUAKA

Newsletter of
South Auckland Branch
Birds New Zealand
Te Kahui Matai Manu o Aotearoa

July 2022

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Greetings Kuaka readers, yes, it's time for the July edition: something to read on wet winter nights.

For those of you who didn't make it to this month's meeting at the Papakura Croquet Clubrooms here is a synopsis of what you missed:

SIGHTINGS:

- ✚ Matuku have been seen at Hoods Landing on the Waikato, and also at Pukorokoro, and Karaka. The one at Karaka was unexpected – do you know of any in our rohi? Please let Sue, David or Wendy know.
- ✚ Northern NZ dotterel were seen in record numbers (21 individuals) near the Kaiaua school during the Firth of Thames Wader Bird census a couple of weeks ago.
- ✚ Pied stilt, SIPO, and other species are enjoying the bare soil and rain water ponds at the earthworks behind Tony W's place at Ardmore.



The matuku at Hoods Landing

DISCUSSION

- ✚ Kereru feeding on tree leaves have been noted by one of our members, they appeared to eating new foliage on mahoe trees (or it could have been the struggling kowhai nearby!). When fruit is scarce kereru eat leaves, favouring kowhai, tree lucerne, willow and poplar. They will also feed on the ground on fresh grass and clover.
- ✚ A short discussion on the presence of redpoll in our rohe: none have been recorded on Ebird. NZBirdsonline says they frequent parks, golf courses, croplands and orchards. The website also says that they are widespread and fairly common in Te Wai Pounamu but less common in Te ika a mauī and have probably declined there in recent years. Ian suggested taking particular note of finch flocks, especially gold-finch, as the redpoll often flocks with them in the winter months. Do let Sue, David or Wendy know if you see any.
- ✚ The potential for NZ dotterel/tuturiwhatu to nest in open areas within urban environments was discussed, with Gwen pointing out that they used the open ground around Albany while the development of that centre was going on. In our rohi they have been seen at Ardmore Airport, on ploughed ground at Bombay and on the Pukekohe golf course. Like on the beaches on the Awhitu and Coromandel Peninsulas, off-leash dogs are a major problem for nesting dotterel (and many other species).
- ✚ Tony W commented that his blackbird has been singing an abbreviated form of song for several weeks now; this led to a discussion around thrush and blackbird singing. I am sitting here listening to a thrush singing loudly outside my window while I type this.
The song of the blackbird is similar to that of the thrush but without the repeated phrases that characterise thrush song. Blackbirds sing mainly from July to January, mainly in the early morning and evening. Thrushes have a song with a wide range of notes, often repeated and call from around May to November. Calling can occur throughout the year and often starts before sunrise.

SPEAKER: Daria Erastovia gave us an update on her backyard sugar water feeding project and spoke about her new role at Mangemangeroa.



Daria last spoke to us about backyard feeding of birds back in September 2021. Her project was looking at the influence of garden sugar feeders on tui behaviour and health.

Sugar-water should be put in the same category as junk food and whilst it may help the birds through lean periods, it should not be made available when other food sources, such as flowering trees, are available. Habitat restoration projects would benefit from including some exotic plants to help ensure nectar is available throughout the year.

No evidence was found of the feeders transmitting pathogens but good hygiene standards were applied at each site. Interestingly, Daria and her team found that the likelihood of lice infection in silvereyes/tauhou was lower in gardens with feeders and at feeders with higher sugar concentrations (20%). Similar results applied to tui.

Despite the identified risks associated with sugar water feeding, there appears to be potential benefits for native nectivorous birds in winter.

Daria's latest project, working for Predator Free Howick, is looking at the effects of habitat restoration on bird species composition. The work is based on the Mangemangeroa Reserve, an area of estuarine landscape at the edge of suburbia (Howick).



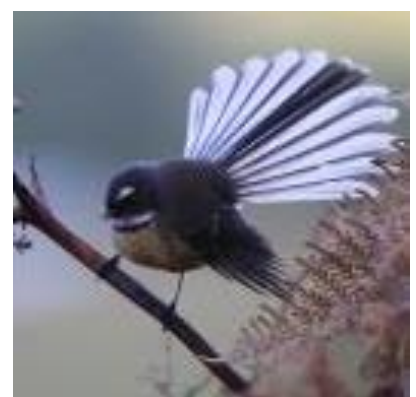
After twenty years of restorative planting the edge of the forest has been extended and erosion prone hillsides planted with a variety of pioneer species; cabbage trees, manuka, karamu, pigeonwood and mahoe. Larger canopy trees such as taraire, kahikatea, puriri, and kowhai, all eco-sourced from within the forest and grown from seed by volunteers, are now pushing through the pioneer species.

Coastal forest provides excellent food and shelter for possum, rat and mustelid species. These animals feast on large seeds of the canopy species and devour the young flowering shoots. The eggs and young of the native birds are also preyed upon. Thus, to maintain a dynamic coastal forest ecosystem control of these pests is essential.

Daria is looking at the effect of habitat restoration on native bird/manu populations and how native and exotic species make differing use of the different stages of forest regrowth.



rufus fantail, OZ



Piwakawaka, NZ

BEACH PATROL

Following stormy weather in June we undertook a beach patrol towards the end of the month. We had the perfect day for the walk - the tide was well out, sand firm, sun shining, and wind light. Perfect!



Our haul of manu comprised: three penguin/koroa, 4 diving petrel/kuaka (yes, kuaka), 1 little shearwater/totorore, 2 gannet/takapu, 2 fairy prion/titi wainui, 1 thin billed prion, and a paradise shelduck/putangitangi

A wee bit of beach patrol history (from the early 2000's)



Seen recently at Karioitahi Beach were members of the South Auckland branch of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand with Dr Paul Hutchison, MP for Port Waikato, and some of the birds recovered. At the back are Mike Clark and Ken Pickett. In front: Bruce Shanks, Dr Paul Hutchison, Wendy Goz and John Brown.

PROGRAMME FOR 2022

Monthly Meetings: held on the second Tuesday of each month, at the Papakura Croquet Club, 1 Chapel Street Papakura. Meetings start at 7:30. Visitor's welcome. \$3.00 donation to cover costs please.

Aug 9	Adrian Riegan	Banding and breeding of Ak's west coast dotterel
	Gwen Pulham	Behavioural differences between coastal & urban dotterel
	TBA	Field Trip to Slipper Is
Sept 13	Keith Woodley	History of Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists Trust and the connection to BirdsNZ South Auckland

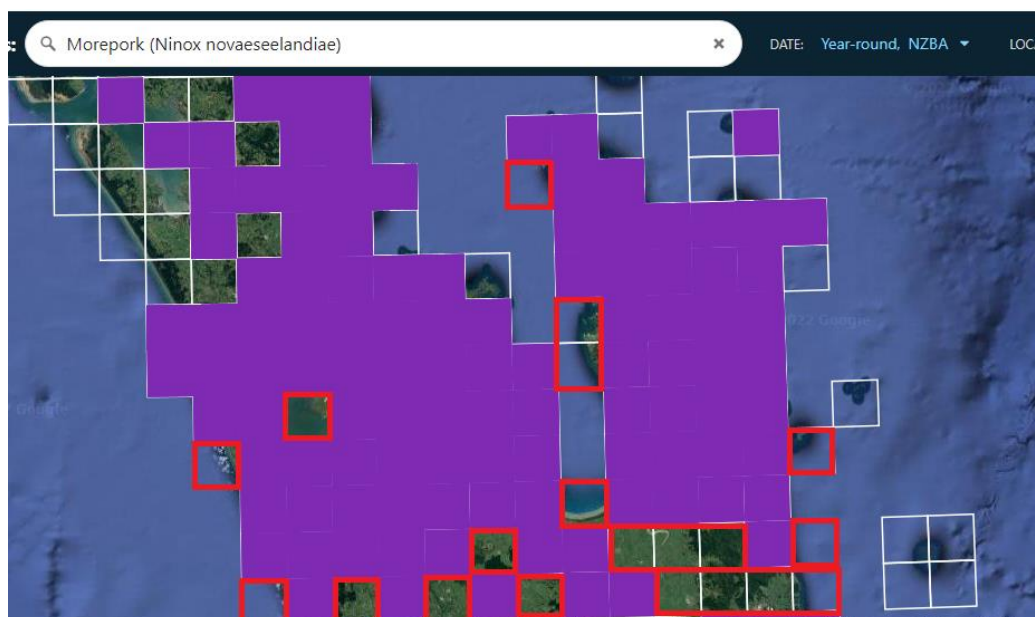
ATLAS REPORT

Well, we are half way through winter, and in the last month we have managed to increase the number of checklists in about half of the squares that were highlighted as having low winter counts. This month I want to focus on 2 things:

Nocturnal counts This is an updated map of the winter nocturnal counts for our region. There has been an increase in the number of counts over the last month, thanks to Wendy's ruru survey. The squares with **red borders have had no night counts done in winter**, while the yellow squares have had less than half an hour of effort, so there is still more to do!



This map shows purple squares where ruru/morepork have been recorded in any season over the last 3 years. As you can see, they are pretty widespread, but there are a few squares with red borders where they haven't been detected yet, so if you happen to be travelling in any of these places at night, stop and listen for a short time (or ask friends or family who live in the square to listen out for us).



Between now and the end of August, listen out for at least 5 minutes any time between 5.45pm and 6.45am and record all of the birds that you see or hear, e.g. morepork, spur wing plovers, pukeko, maybe even kiwi on the Coromandel. Ian reminded us at the meeting that there could be shorebirds such as SIPO or pied stilts moving about at this time of year, so if you hear any, please jot it down. You probably won't be able to see them in the dark, but make your best guess at the number of birds. Even if you see and hear nothing, it is still important to record this. Jot down the following details and send them through to Sue so they can be loaded into the atlas: Exact location of sighting, Date, Start Time, duration of count, Species, Number of birds seen

'Missing species' I have been analysing the data for each square to see which species have been seen so far, and then working out what else we might need to go looking for. I have now produced a spreadsheet of species which are common or locally common in our region, and listed the squares where they have not been detected yet (you might be surprised to learn that mallards and spur winged plovers have not been seen everywhere). I have also included some cryptic species.

In the next few days, I will send an email to everyone on the mailing list that I have an address for (mostly Birds NZ members), with a map of the square that they live in and a list of the species that are 'missing' from that square. If you don't get an email, but would like to help out, just send me your address. I would really appreciate your feedback on any locations in your square where you think there might be suitable habitat for these species, or even just let me know that there is definitely no suitable habitat for certain species. I am relying on your local knowledge. If you want to investigate those places yourself, that would be great. Just do a count of at least 5 minutes and record all the species that you do find, and enter into the atlas. Or send the following details to Sue: Exact location of sighting, Date, Start Time, duration of count, Species, Number of birds seen

Even if you don't see or hear the target species, it is important to record that – it is still important to know they are missing from suitable habitat.

FIELD TRIPS

We currently have 9 people interested in the Slipper Island field trip, but if you want to be added to the list, please let Sue know. David is currently trying to finalise a date in August.



This photo comes from Pokeno. A little while ago a white-faced heron began visiting a house near the church in Pokeno. It started tapping on the windows and following the occupants around from window to window. Then it bought a friend but the second bird is still standoffish.

The homeowners have not fed the bird so where did it learn this behaviour? Has it been hand fed? has it been through bird rescue? One of the Parry triplets maybe? (do you recognise it Bruce?).

If only manu could talk!!

Pukeko respond to changes in the size of their red beak shield

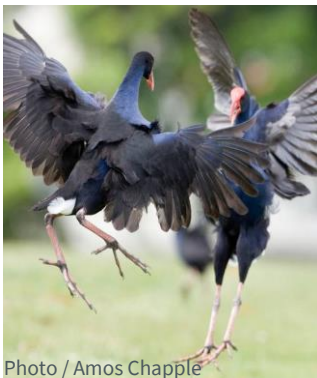


Photo / Amos Chapple

This is old research (2012) but like me this may be the first time you have read about it.

As we know pukeko have a power-hungry, aggressive streak and a 2012 study showed they vaunt their macho dominance with the size of their red frontal shields. As with other species, researchers have long suspected the bigger their shield, the more aggressive and dominating they were among their peers.

Researchers confirmed this by using paint to reduce the size of the shields, and watching as the feared ring-leaders instantly lost their tough-guy status.

Massey University ecologist Dr James Dale, who supervised the study by McMaster University PhD student Cody Dey, likened the birds' badges to the number of stars on a general's uniform, or the colour of karate belt. "We found that the size of the red shield in pukeko correlates very strongly to social dominance." When the bird's shield was made to look smaller, they observed two changes. The birds were challenged more by other members of their group.

"And the birds actually shrank the size of their true shield, probably in response to hormonal changes brought about by the increased challenges by other members of the group," Dr Dale said. "The bottom line is that it pays to signal your dominance honestly or else you're likely to get into more conflict - much like it might be dangerous to enter a karate competition wearing a belt colour that is not an accurate reflection of your skills."

Researchers had found the time a species spent developing its badge spoke of its status, but less was known about its social interaction. "The big picture is what keeps a signal honest, and how is this communication kept free of cheaters?"

"Badges of status" aren't just seen in pukeko. They might be the bright tails of peacocks, or the facial markings of wasps, but the classic examples are those used to settle minor dominance contests in flocks of foraging birds. The size of the black throat patch in male house sparrows, for example, reflects aggression during feeding - but it's not clearly understood how these signals are kept reliable.

Researchers believe one important possibility is badges are kept honest through social punishment. It's held that if an individual sends "mixed signals" - its badge reflecting a status lower than its actual dominance - the bird's peers will act aggressively toward it to figure out how tough it really is.



BirdLife Australia

29 May 2022 • 

Look closely – those aren't leaves! 🤔

Charles Davis Photography's inc...[see more](#)



FACEBOOK

Some of the past month's posts are shown below. Go to the Facebook page, @birdsnzsa, to find the links to follow for any particular posting that interests you.

If you have some good photos, information, or links that you think would be suitable for our site send Wendy or David an email with the photo or link.



STUFF.CO.NZ

Future of tiny, endangered rock wren hinging on predator control

A South Island-wide survey shows the future ...



INTERESTINGENGINEERING.COM

Smart Camera System Saves Eagles from Wind Turbine Deaths

An AI-powered camera system reduces wind ...



THEGUARDIAN.COM

Birds are more like 'feathered apes' than 'bird brains'

For centuries scientists dismissed birds as d...



STUFF.CO.NZ

Feral cats hunting high in South Island mountains, some even crossing passes to ...

Trackers showed cats roaming tens of kilom...



University of Otago

10 Jun 2022 ·

Ever wondered what a day in the life of a penguin is like? 🐧🌊 New research at Otago tracking the at-sea foragin...see more



Common name-
The red-bellied grackle.

Scientific name-
Hypopyrrhus pyrohypogaster.
...see more





Trust you enjoyed
the read
Wendy and Sue