

Celebrating a lifetime dedicated to seabirds

Graeme Taylor receives the Birds NZ Robert Falla Memorial award



Graeme holds a Chatham Island petrel in 2002. Image: Helen Gummer

Graeme Taylor, Principal Science Advisor Marine, has been awarded the Robert Falla Memorial award at the 2022 New Zealand Bird Conference which was held in Ōtautahi/Christchurch in June. “This award recognises Graeme’s significant and longterm contributions to ornithology and (sea)bird conservation in Aoteaora New Zealand” said Society President and colleague Bruce McKinlay.

Graeme has always been dedicated to the study of animals, seabirds in particular, and his achievements are numerous.

Graeme was a keen student at Canterbury University and graduated in 1985 with a MSc in zoology. After graduation, Graeme departed to Campbell Island to study Norway rats, providing an essential step towards the eradication of this invasive predator. His stay on Campbell Island led him to become familiar with many seabirds.

Remote island locations soon became a feature of Graeme’s career. You’d be forgiven for getting the impression that the more remote the island, the more happy Graeme was with his studies!

Following his work on Campbell Island, Graeme became a member of the Threatened Species Unit within DOC. A significant contribution was the publication of the seabird action plan. This landmark publication has had enduring conservation value for many species.

Graeme managed the Banding Office in the mid-2000s, during which he introduced a basis for digital record keeping and analysis of banded bird records. This work ultimately led to the current FALCON data management system.

Subsequently, as a Principal Science Advisor, Graeme continues to be DOC’s (and New Zealand’s) leading seabird scientist. Since his time on Campbell Island, Graeme has worked with more than 30

species of seabirds on most of our offshore islands. Particularly noteworthy is his work on the recovery of the Chatham Island taiko and Chatham Island petrel.

Over the course of nearly 40 years, Graeme has gained an immense amount of knowledge that he always willingly shares through discussion, lectures, and publications. Graeme has co-authored more than 100 scientific papers, books, and book chapters. In a recognition of Graeme's experience, he is the New Zealand representative on the Scientific Council of the United Nations Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species.

Throughout his career, Graeme has always been an enthusiastic mentor of early career seabird scientists. Johannes Fischer, a more recent recruit to DOC and one of Graeme's many mentees, noted that "Graeme is always sharing his experiences and encouraging new staff to participate in field work and to look for opportunities to develop."



Graeme installing nest boxes for Kuaka/Whenua Hou Diving Petrels on Whenua Hou

Johannes finished by saying "When the award was announced at the Conference there was a thunderous and sustained round of applause from the 80 Society members present in the Auditorium. There was overwhelming support for Graeme's recognition of his unrivalled contributions to the conservation of New Zealand's seabirds".

Congratulations Graeme, very well deserved!

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