# **BIRDS NEW ZEALAND** *Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa*

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#### **Fledgling Fund** student travel grant -**Imogen Foote**

I travelled to Christchurch in June to take part in my first Birds New Zealand conference. With an incredible 38 talks and 11 posters centred around birds, the weekend provided something for everyone. The bar was set high with an impressive show of science communication, and an inspiring enthusiasm for birds. I enjoyed hearing from a range of birders, from



Imogen Foote presenting on her PhD research: Michael Szabo.

activities of community monitoring groups, to the effects of light pollution, plastic pollution and fisheries on our birds, to dealing with banding data and Atlas checklists. I found it very illuminating to see the range of different backgrounds of all participants, and the possibilities of so many bird-related career paths. I very much enjoyed sharing the preliminary results from my PhD (Using genomics as a tool to help resolve taxonomy and population structure of the Antipodean and Gibson's albatross) and hugely appreciated the support and enthusiasm for my research. I can't wait to attend in the 2023 conference in New Plymouth and give an update. I am very grateful to Birds New Zealand for awarding me a 'Fledgling Fund' student travel grant to attend this conference. It provided an opportunity to reconnect with old friends and form new networks.

#### Hūnua Kōkako thriving

The Kōkako Recovery Programme reported in June that the latest Hūnua Ranges survey found the Kōkako population has increased to 229 pairs (and eight territorial singles) within the 2,000 hectares there receiving annual ground-based pest control and 1080 operations over the wider landscape. The Hūnua Ranges now contains the second largest Kokako population on the mainland after Pureora Forest Park.



North Island Kokako: Stephen Collins.

#### Kākāriki Karaka breed near Nelson

Sixty-two captive-bred Kākāriki Karaka/Orange-fronted Parakeets have been released into the Brook Waimārama Sanctuary since November 2021. In January 2022, nine nests were found and the first fledgling was located in March - the first successful breeding of the species in the area for 100 years.

#### **PUBLISHERS**

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We welcome advertising. Free classified ads for members are at the editor's discretion. Articles or photographs of birds in New Zealand or the South Pacific are welcome such as news about birds, members' activities, birding sites, identification, or letters. Copy deadlines are 10th Feb, May, Aug and 1st Nov. Views expressed by contributors do not necessarily represent those of OSNZ (Inc) or the editor. When you are finished with your magazine please consider passing it on to others who are interested in New Zealand's birds.

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#### **COVER IMAGE**

Dark morph New Zealand Fantail/Tiwakawaka Photo by Mike Ashbee: https://www.mikeashbeephotography.com/

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# From the President's Desk

Since catching up with 180 members at the Conference in Christchurch, it's been pretty quiet here in Otago. Like most regions, Otago has had a lot of rain and the rivers are flowing high along with snow on the high country. It was a pleasure to see members at the conference. The organisation was seamless and very professional. I was grateful to see registrants were adopting the best practise advice on protecting each other from Covid. Nick Allen, who led the organising committee, was ably supported by Jan Walker, Sandra Wallace, Jim Briskie, Don Goodale, and Brian Darlow. On the Monday I understand that the field trips led by Andrew Crossland, Bev Alexander and Paul Scofield were all successful and participants saw a wide range of birds and habitats.

## **Council Meeting**

Council met for a full meeting the day before the conference. This was the first time we have been together since Thames, and it was nice meeting up with each other again. We were able to review a half year profit and loss statement for the first half of the year. Through the increase in Society subscriptions and control of expenditure the current situation is better than this time last year. Council also reviewed the accounts for the 2021 year and the reports from the independent reviewer. The reviewer's report was favourable and there were no items that they wished to bring to our attention. Council also acknowledged the work that Josie Galbreath had completed while on Council. We now have a vacancy which we will seek to fill by a co-option process. Council received a full set of reports from the regional representatives and scheme convenors. Reviewing these is a very enjoyable process as the reports give a very full picture of the range of activities that the Society is engaged in.

Council and the regional representatives also had a very productive meeting, and it was good to see such a full turnout. Ian MacLean did a highly effective job in leading the regional representatives through a substantial agenda.

## Incorporated Societies Act

Council is considering the ramifications of the Incorporated Societies Act 2022. We anticipate some changes will be required to the Society's constitution within the next four years in order to comply with the requirements of the new Act. It provides the legal framework under which all Incorporated Societies are governed and has increased the standards that societies such ours must meet to be registered as an incorporated society.

## **Checklist launch**

A highlight of the Conference was the launch by Colin Miskelly of the fifth edition of the Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand. In his presentation Colin summarised a wide range of changes which included reducing the geographic scope of the checklist to New Zealand and including a myriad of additions to the List. The efforts of researchers in describing our extinct fauna have made a significant impact on the size of the checklist with 38 extinct species having been described and added to the list. The total number of bird species, including fossil species, now accepted from the New Zealand region is 485.

## **Occasional Publications**

The Checklist has been published as an occasional publication of the Society. This is an online-only series of monograph-sized manuscripts which are not suitable for Notornis but represent considerable blocks of ornithological research which should not be lost in the grey literature. If you are working on a project which may be too large for Notornis, then contact a Councillor to discuss whether it should be included in this series.

## NZ Bird Atlas update

The Atlas team are reporting that records being submitted to the scheme continue to grow. At the end of autumn for year three, over 250,000 checklists had been received for the entire project and it had passed 93% grid square coverage. Some 1,100 people have contributed data. The Atlas team are now focusing on supporting Atlas Expeditions to those parts of the country with less coverage. Of course, members don't have to wait for an Atlas Expedition to undertake atlasing in Gisborne, back country Otago and Canterbury, Westland, or Northland. These parts of New Zealand are all amenable to enjoying trips whenever members are able to visit. Atlas participants should keep an eye out for the monthly challenges when they are announced. These provide the opportunity to do something different and make a real contribution to the Atlas.

## **Beach Patrol update**

Ian Armitage reports that work continues to integrate the Beach Patrol database into the Society's website, and the development of a digital system that members will soon be able to use to submit their beach observations. Access to the Beach Patrol Scheme on the Society's website is here:

www.birdsnz.org.nz/schemes/beachpatrolscheme/

## **Society Supporters**

A lot of activity in the Society is possible through our sponsors and advertisers. Heritage Expeditions, Swarovski, and NT Bird Specialists all support Birds New Zealand through advertising. I encourage members to support these companies. Toi Toi Wines are supporting the NZ Bird Atlas through the Atlas Expeditions and the T-Gear Charitable Trust support the Birds New Zealand Research Fund. My thanks to all these organisations for their ongoing support of our work.

## NZ Bird Conference 2023

Finally, Peter Fryer was able to share with the AGM that organising is underway for the 2023 Conference in New Plymouth. It will be good to head to Taranaki next year.

As I write this, Spring is around the corner. In Otago this means getting our regional projects all ready to go. I'm looking forward to participating in SI Robin nest monitoring at Mopanui and engaging with students on the Dunedin Town Belt bird trail. Also, Richard Schofield has more atlasing planned; there just aren't enough weekends to go around.

#### BRUCE McKINLAY, PRESIDENT



President Bruce McKinlay presents Edin Whitehead with her Notornis Student Author Award: Nick Allen.

## Hon. Poto Williams new **Minister of** Conservation

Hon. Poto Williams MP has been appointed as Minister of Conservation, taking over the portfolio from Kiritapu Allan MP in June after a cabinet reshuffle. She has been the Member of Parliament for Christchurch East since 2013 and is also Minister for Disability Issues and Associate 🛛 Hon. Poto Williams. Minister for Children.



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\* Make a credit card payment online: www.birdsnz.org.nz/ membership/you-can-help/make-a-donation/#!form/Donation

## Leaving a gift in your will

No matter how much it is, leaving a gift in your will makes a real difference. All funds received go to our Projects Assistance Fund, so you can be confident your gift will have a real impact. It is important to consult your solicitor, Guardian Trust, or Public Trust office for advice on drawing up your will. A general gift allows us to direct funds where they are needed, but we are also very happy to discuss options if you would like to leave a gift for a specific purpose. There are two options:

\* Specific Legacy: You may wish to leave a specific amount of money, shares, bonds, items, or a nominated gift to Birds New Zealand, or

\* Residual Legacy: You may wish to leave a gift of all or part of your net estate (what remains after all taxes, specific gifts to family and friends, and the cost of administering the estate have been paid). This should be expressed as a percentage or share of your estate. If you would like to discuss either option please contact our Executive Officer Ingrid Hutzler: eo@birdsnz.org.nz

### Falla Memorial Award, A.T. Edgar **Junior Award & Meritorious Service Awards**

Nominations are called for these awards and should be with the OSNZ Secretary (secretary@birdsnz.org.nz) or (PO Box 834, Nelson, 7040) by 31st December 2022. Nominations should be on the standard forms which can be found on our website (https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/about-us/manual/) or obtained from your RR or OSNZ Secretary. The Awards Committee will consider all nominations and its recommendations will be sent to Council for consideration at its summer meeting. More information on OSNZ award procedures is available from your RR, OSNZ Secretary, or here: https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/ awards-and-prizes/society-awards/



## **Keith Woodley receives** New Zealand Order of Merit

Keith Woodley was made a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit in the Queen's Birthday and Platinum Jubilee Honours List for services to shorebird conservation. Keith has been the Shorebird Centre Manager for the Pūkorokoro Miranda Naturalists Trust (PMNT) for 28 years. In that time, he has led an ever-expanding range of the Trust's activities from various annual courses including Wader Identification, through organising visits of national and international speakers, delivering talks to local schools, ensuring wardens and field staff at the centre are undertaking trapping, and engaging with iwi to address environmental issues while meeting Te Tiriti O Waitangi obligations.

During his time as manager, the Shorebird Centre has grown to be a popular stop for birders and tourists, and the largest specialist natural history bookshop in New Zealand. He has published two books, one on godwits in 2009 and another on New Zealand shorebirds in 2012. He has made a significant contribution to the work of PMNT in East Asia, as an integral part of the New Zealand delegation to the East Australasian Flyway Partnership. He has travelled regularly to China and to North and South Korea to work on projects and advocate for the protection of key habitats to maintain shorebird migratory patterns to New Zealand, including the signing of an agreement with China in 2016 and an application for UN World Heritage Status to protect these habitats. He has also been an elected member of the Birds New Zealand Council since 2014.

## Avian influenza

Since November 2021 there have been multiple cases of serious outbreaks of Avian Influenza (AI) in Europe and Canada. Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) has also been reported in the USA. The Seabird Working Group of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Program has recommended that seabird researchers and birdwatchers need to be vigilant and report any signs of sickness or disease or deaths among local wild birds to the relevant national authorities. The NZ Ministry for Primary Industries has the main responsibility for exotic disease surveillance and investigation of unusual mortality clusters in wild birds. If you find an unusual number of dead wild birds (especially terns or waders) in NZ you should phone the NZ exotic disease hotline to report them and seek advice: 0800 80 99 66.

If you are asked to collect bird carcasses, please make sure you wear good PPE with disposable gloves and a face mask. Double bag any carcasses singly with two labels. The label should have the species (if known), date of collection, site of collection, name of collector as a minimum. If the carcasses are to be sent to a diagnostic lab immediately, refrigerate them prior to transport and send with icepacks to keep cool. Ensure the lab knows it's coming. If the carcasses are to be held for more than a day or two before sending, freeze them, and note this on the label.



## First NZ record of Matsudaira's Storm Petrel?

On 27th May, Oscar Thomas reported a potential first NZ record of Matsudaira's Storm Petrel (*Oceanodroma matsudairae*) along with five photos posted to the BirdingNZ.net online forum. The bird had been found beach-wrecked on Muriwai beach by Susan and John Anderson: "Earlier today I was messaged by a friend who lives out at Muriwai in West Auckland that they found an unusual seabird dead on the beach. They have collected it (in freezer for the museum) and supplied photos for ID."

After three more photos and comments made by Oscar and several others were posted there saying that it looked to be a Matsudaira's Storm Petrel, Matt Rayner of Auckland Museum provided this update to Oscar Thomas: "I have had a chance to look at the bird and took a few measurements (bill 17.7, tarsus 25.65, wing 188, MTC 28.9, tail outer 99.8, tail inner 70.02) which most closely matches those available for *Hydrobates matsudairae* in Brook 2004. All other potential Pacific *Oceanodroma* are smaller except *tristrami* which overlaps but does not have the distinct white shaft bases that this specimen has – also diagnostic of *matsudairae*. So I agree with your initial description of Matsudaira's Storm Petrel (*Oceanodroma matsudairae*). In terms of moult there were no pin or short primaries and the feathers themselves look reasonably new. Retrices are all in place but with some wear."

Matsudaira's Storm Petrel is a large, dark storm petrel with big wings, pale wing 'flashes', broad buff brown crescents on the upper wings, a long forked tail, and a relatively long black bill. In flight, it is languid and often buoyant with a long tail mostly held closed. Foraging birds patter and land briefly to feed with their wings partially raised. Breeding takes place from January–July in the north-west Pacific on a few remote islands south-west of Japan and they have a non-breeding distribution that extends as far south as waters off New Guinea and north-western Australia. Oscar Thomas has since submitted an Unusual Bird Report to the Records Appraisal Committee, which is yet to be assessed.

## Alternative names for New Zealand birds

The 2022 (5th edition) Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand contains a comprehensive list of English, Māori, and Moriori names for birds found in New Zealand (see Appendix 3). This is derived from a database of 2,822 English names, 2,495 Māori names, and 20 Moriori names that are presented in detail as supplementary materials to the Checklist (as a spreadsheet). If you know of any names that are missing from the list, please contact checklist@birdsnz.org.nz (please include a PDF, hyperlink, scan, or photo showing the name in print).

COLIN MISKELLY, CHECKLIST COMMITTEE CONVENER

Section of Coast	No. of Cards	No. of Birds	km covered
Auckland East	21	42	41
Auckland West	35	187	193
Bay of Plenty	23	50	53
Canterbury North	3	10	5
Canterbury South	0	0	0
East Coast NI	2	2	4
Fiordland	0	0	0
North Coast SI	0	0	0
Northland East	8	54	27
Northland West	4	15	138
Chatham Island	3	12	4
Otago	0	0	0
Southland	16	51	45
Taranaki	0	0	0
Wairarapa	1	1	1
Westland	2	3	2
Wellington South	3	1	11
Wellington West	24	501	166
Totals	149	914	690

## **2020 Beach Patrol Report**

As reported in the June 2021 issue, 2020 produced no significant wrecks compared to previous years, and no particularly unusual species. Birds recovered by beach patrols in 2020 were: Wandering Albatross 2; Shy/White-capped Albatross 8; Salvin's Albatross 1; Buller's Albatross 3; Light-mantled Sooty Albatross 1; Albatross sp.2; Northern Giant Petrel 6; Southern Giant petrel 1; Giant petrel sp. 1; Buller's Shearwater 49: Sooty Shearwater 36; Shorttailed Shearwater 21; Flesh-footed Shearwater 17; Fluttering Shearwater 59; Hutton's Shearwater 16; Little Shearwater 6; Diving Petrel 40; White-chinned Petrel 2; Black Petrel 3; Antarctic Fulmar 1; Cape Petrel 1; Fairy Prion 77; Broad-billed Prion 20; Thin-billed Prion 2; Antarctic Prion 3; Prion sp. 83; Cook's Petrel 3; Mottled Petrel 3; Soft-plumaged Petrel 1; Kerguelen Petrel 1; Whiteheaded Petrel 4; Grey-faced Petrel 4; White-faced Storm Petrel 3; Black-bellied Storm Petrel 1; Storm petrel sp. 1; Unidentified seabird 9; Little Penguin 46; White-flippered Penguin 1; Fiordland Crested Penguin 1; Australasian Gannet 46; Pied Shag 4; Little Black Shag 1; Little Shag 1; Spotted Shag 7; Pitt Island Shag 1; Shag sp. 2; White-faced Heron 1; Reef Heron 1; Black Swan 10; Feral goose 2; Canada Goose 24; Paradise Shelduck 3; Mallard 13; Swamp Harrier 1; Common Pheasant 1; Weka 2; Pukeko 3; Variable Oystercatcher 4; Banded Dotterel 1; Southern Black-backed Gull 86; Red-billed Gull 144; Arctic Skua 1; White-fronted Tern 12; Tern sp. 1; Feral Pigeon 2; Blackbird 2; Tui 2; Magpie 11.

LLOYD ESLER, BEACH PATROL SCHEME CONVENER

## **Banding workshops**

The Banding Office recently ran some indoor banding workshops for school students. Birds New Zealand members and banders. In Rotorua, I ran a workshop for 43 Year 5-8 students at a school after a student found a gannet band on a beach and reported it to the Banding Office. Coloured strips of paper attached around the students' legs, coupled with various games, taught them how to record colour combinations while sharing an interesting fact about their favourite species. A mist-net held by teachers stood up well to having bird puppets thrown at it and then carefully extracted, and the display of banding equipment ended up with at least a few students being banded. The Banding Office also teamed up with Wingspan Birds of Prey Trust to host two fully-booked workshops for registered banders. After an overview of the Scheme, banders had the opportunity to practice band closure and removal using different band sizes. If you want to host or present a banding workshop, please contact us: bandingoffice@doc.govt.nz

MICHELLE BRADSHAW, DOC BANDING OFFICER



Silvereye/Tauhou duo (leucistic bird at right), Mosgiel, August 2022: Kurien Yohannon.

## AOC 2022: Cultural divergence in Floreana Mockingbird

In ornithology, one of the most studied cultural traits is bird vocalisations. The slight changes in vocalisations between bird populations could originate dialects and so is considered a cultural change, or cultural divergence. I studied the cultural divergence between two isolated populations of an endangered Floreana Mockingbird in the Galápagos Islands. With human colonisation of the Galápagos Islands, this species became extinct on the island where it used to live, but two small populations on inaccessible offshore islets survived the siege of invasive mammals (same history as NZ).

Currently, there are plans to reintroduce the species to its original range, but these populations have been separated for more than 150 years, so what happens if they cannot understand each other? That was the question I tried to respond to in my research and the topic I presented at the Australasian Ornithological Conference (AOC) 2022 thanks to the student grant awarded to me by Birds New Zealand. In my research I found differentiation in the vocalisation of this endangered species. These same traits have been observed in other endangered species such as the North Island Kokako. In the case of the Floreana Mockingbird, my findings open the door to more research on the behavioural ecology and management of the species.

> ENZO M. REYES, DOCTORAL CANDIDATE, MASSEY UNIVERSITY

## Meritorious Services Award for Dr Martine Maron

Birds New Zealand gave a Meritorious Services Award (MSA) to Professor Martine Maron of the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Queensland, at the 2022 Australasian Ornithological Conference (AOC) held online in February. Dr Maron has cooperated closely for many years with Birds New Zealand on the organisation of several AOCs that bring together researchers, students and others to share new knowledge about birds in Australia and New Zealand.

Her familiarity, experience and dedication to ornithology and ecology and her commitment to Australasian ornithological cooperation are outstanding. A feature of her research seeks to improve conservation policy. Dr Maron collaborates with a broad network of individuals and organisations to help achieve effective uptake of research findings into policy and environmental management. Her close and friendly cooperation with our Society through her role in the organisation of several AOCs has helped to make New Zealand birds and their environments much better known to Australian ornithologists and policy makers. This MSA recognises a significant and enduring contribution made by Dr Maron to ornithology in New Zealand and Australia over a period of many years through her outstanding leadership of several AOCs.

DAVID LAWRIE & IAN ARMITAGE



Piwakawaka/NZ Fantail: Mike Ashbee.

### NZ Garden Bird Survey summary 2011–2021

Manaaki Whenua–Landcare Research has distilled data gathered by New Zealanders from almost 42,000 garden survey submissions received since 2010 and used it to produce some interesting metrics. Kererū counts show a 102% increase over 10 years, increasing rapidly over the last 5 years (57%). Pīwakawaka (NZ Fantail) counts were up 47% over 10 years. Tūī continue to increase nationally (30% over 10 years), and increasingly in Canterbury, Marlborough, Otago, and the West Coast. The Silvereye (Tauhou) data show that this species' long-term slow decline is now 10% compared with 23% last year, with a moderate increase in numbers since 2016. Korimako (Bellbird) numbers show little change over the past five years.

There has been little change to Common Myna counts nationally, but in the Wellington region they have shown a rapid increase of 202% over the past 10 years. Starling numbers continue to decline over both the five and 10 year period, although their rate of decline has slowed compared to 2020. Goldfinch numbers show a shallow increase over 10 years that was first detected last year, and which has increased from 18% to 30%. Finally, Song Thrush, House Sparrow, Dunnock and Chaffinch numbers showed little change over the past five years.

## 2022 David Medway Scholarship – monitoring kiwi

The 2022 David Medway Scholarship has been awarded to AJS Tansell for an investigation into camera traps as a tool for monitoring kiwi: "Key to gauging the success of management interventions for protected species is outcome monitoring. Haast Tokoeka is a nationally vulnerable kiwi population currently undergoing intensive management and monitoring. They are highly sensitive to disturbance, particularly where it occurs over a sustained timeframe. In disturbance sensitive species it is preferable to use non-invasive monitoring methods where possible. In the past, non-invasive monitoring has focused on call counts. A drawback of call counts is that they do not detect young birds and are not a very sensitive method. Camera traps are another non-invasive tool that has potential for kiwi monitoring. Inspiration for this on-going PhD research into camera trapping for kiwi monitoring comes from years of practical experience working with kiwi. This research investigates the utility of systematic camera trapping by comparing survey results from camera trapping with the proven method of detector dog survey. Additionally, we will compare camera trap survey to acoustic recorder survey. A novel method that we trialled and which is showing promise is use of stereo cameras for bill measurement. We will be reporting our findings when our analyses are complete. We will also be able to make recommendations on best practice and the suitability of different survey methods for different situations."

AJS TANSELL

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George and Doreen Grant's birdwatching note book: Bruce McKinlay.





Black-fronted Dotterel/John Woods (NZ Birds Online)

 Cattle Egret / Duncan Watson (NZ Birds Online)

## New life for old note books

As the recognition of *eBird* as the key depository for historic and current ornithological observation grows we are left with the residual problem of what to do with old birdwatching note books and the hand written records contained in them. A case study of this challenge has been worked through in Otago over the past three years. George and Doreen Grant were long-term members of the Society who kept notes of the birds they saw in the South Island during 1966-1995. Their hand written records recorded the distribution of 54 bird species. Being based on the Taieri Plains during that time enabled them to be close observers of the pattern of Cattle Egret (CE) and Black-fronted Dotterel (BFD) on the plains, making circa 500 observations of them.

Their note book records have now been digitised into a spreadsheet which makes future analysis more accessible. The records have all been uploaded to *eBird* and copies of the original note books and the spreadsheet have been added to the Society's Otago region's online archive. Their records of BFD and CE show a distinctive pattern of invasion, decline, and local extinction. There is sufficient data to investigate this historical pattern and compare it with what has happened nationally.

The Grants' records extend the detailed pattern of CE and BFD distribution on the Taieri Plain back as far as 1966. A summary analysis using decadal snap shots shows a pattern of the BFD arriving on the Taieri Plain and expanding its numbers through to the 1990s. After that time the pattern changed with BFD numbers and rates of records on the Taieri Plains declining and BFD moving out across the Southland Plains and invading the Mataura, Oreti and Aparima rivers. Since about 2010 BFD have disappeared from the Taieri Plains. It is the length of the data sets contained in members' old note books that is essential to this process of understanding the pattern of bird invasion in NZ.

Whether it is to upload geo-referenced data to *eBird*, or report on the activity budgets of Sacred Kingfisher, deciphering someone else's handwriting in old note books is not always easy. There is a real risk that some notes may be misunderstood. Another issue is understanding the local names used. Many of the Grants' records mentioned locations based on the names of farmers on the Taieri Plains. The named farming families have all moved on now, so it was difficult to work out some locations from those names. The ideal is for the owner of a note book to decipher their own handwriting by typing up their records into a spreadsheet and uploading them to *eBird*. If you know someone with a note book/s that need to be digitised and uploaded, please encourage them to do so. If you have note books going back for some years/decades, please consider doing so yourself. NEW ZEALAND BIRD ATLAS

## Growing the \$2 million NZ Bird Atlas dataset

The New Zealand Bird Atlas has now received over a <u>quarter</u> of a million checklists submitted by 1,190 passionate Atlasers. Three years' worth of New Zealand birders' time and effort has gone into this nationally significant scheme, and the Atlas Coordination team are over the moon with how the project is progressing across the country. Over 86,000 effort hours have gone into the project so far, which equates to over 3,580 days! We calculate that if 86,000 hours was paid at the Living Wage rate (\$23.65/hour), the dataset and the NZ Bird Atlas community's birding time so far would be worth over \$2 million.

Entering data across the country to fill in all of the Atlas squares remains one of the highest priorities. Of the 3,232 10x10km grid squares, nearly 94% (3,020) have some data in them, even if only five-minutes' worth. The addition of the <u>Department of Conservation's national Tier 1 bird count</u> dataset into the Atlas portal has been a fantastic boost, helping to provide vital observations from those much harder to reach spots. As we enter Spring, we encourage everyone to check the Explore pages of the Atlas *eBird* portal online, to really help target under-surveyed areas, and find what species haven't yet been detected in areas across all four seasons.

We are confident that the results of this five-year project will guide and influence national and regional government conservation policy planning for decades to come. Data quality is therefore of critical importance. Through our desire to ensure that the data collected by participants is as scientifically valuable as possible, we continually advocate for participants to follow the 'Atlas essentials' to help every Atlas participant raise the scientific value of their observations. As a consequence the quality of the majority of data flowing into the NZ Bird Atlas *eBird* portal is of high scientific value, namely through being <u>complete checklists</u>, with <u>accurate abundances for all species</u>, of high <u>resolution over time and distance</u>, and submitted to an <u>individual grid square</u>. We also wish to thank the volunteer *eBird* reviewers who work tirelessly to review rare and unusual records across the country.

Whether you're on a remote island, away on holiday, or just in your backyard, your observations and photos of birds are inherently valuable – even more so when they are uploaded to *eBird*. We also want to encourage people to create the habit of gathering and submitting those on a regular basis to help build datasets wherever you are in the world, to help better inform conservation research, management and better understand the birds around you from local through to global scales. We want the Atlas to make lasting and positive impacts for conservation for our endemic and native bird species and ultimately, we want to better protect the birds we all love.

This project depends on a community with a shared passion. With just under two years left of the Atlas project, there is still more birding to be done. If you have any questions or would like the Atlas team to deliver a talk at your regional meeting, please don't hesitate to contact us here: nzbirdatlas@wmil.co.nz

BRUCE McKINLAY, PRESIDENT

NZ BIRD ATLAS COORDINATION TEAM

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Hundreds of Little Penguins /Kororā found dead in Northland

Hundreds of Little Penguins/Kororā washed up dead on beaches in the Far North, Northland and Auckland were found during winter. Birds New Zealand beach patrols helped document this region-wide event. Isabella Godbert reported 62 dead Kororā from 90 Mile Beach on 11 May, and Ian McLean found 17 at Pakiri Beach on 15 May. Kevin Mathews reported that others had been doing monthly patrols in the 90 Mile Beach area, including dead Kororā washed up in large numbers. He told RNZ, "The birds that I found that were freshly washed ashore certainly appeared that they'd died at sea. You can do a little simple test by checking the sharpness of the keel bone on the breastbone, and they were in very poor condition."



Dead Kororā collected on 90 Mile Beach by Justin Penney (11/6): Terri-Anne Te Aroha Roberts.

Vaughn Turner told RNZ that while walking and atlasing along 90 Mile Beach in late May he counted dead Kororā along 30km of beach over three days: "On the first day 75 dead penguins over a distance of 10 kilometres and then day two, walking north ... that morning I counted 71. The third day, I counted about 59 dead birds." He estimated there would have been more than 200 each day over the 30-kilometre walk. Justin Penney also walked parts of 90 Mile Beach in late May where he collected 109 dead Kororā. He told RNZ that he also found 183 dead Kororā from Waipapakauri to Te Ute on 11 June. RNZ also reported that a local resident had found 40 dead on Tokerau Beach in mid-May, and DOC reportedly received reports of at least 20 on the same beach in early June.

DOC Principal Science Advisor Graeme Taylor told RNZ the large number of Kororā deaths was caused by rising sea temperatures. During La Niña years the penguins struggle to find food and end up starving and becoming hypothermic. Now the warmer years are increasing. "In the past, you might have had a lot of good years followed by one bad year where a lot of birds die, but then they rebound in those good years," he told RNZ. "But if we start to see the balance tipping towards more bad years versus good years, then they're just not going to be able to recover."

Graeme Taylor said it was not just Kororā that were facing extinction in the Far North. "We've lost whole colonies of the Tītī or Sooty Shearwater. In the Far North, there used to be quite reasonable colonies up there, but most of those colonies have now gone, and we've only got a tiny handful of them still breeding in the north. They were going down a little bit, but then they really plunged from about 2010 downwards. Since then, we've been starting to see the entire colonies disappearing."

The Kororā have the same problem, and it was getting worse, he said. "I've just had reports sent to me that this isn't just actually involving chicks, there are now adults dying as well, which is even worse because if adults die, you know then they're not back to breed the following season to replenish the population."

## New Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand

The new fifth edition of the *Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand* was published by Birds New Zealand in late May, and then launched at the annual conference in Christchurch. There are several notable changes from previous editions, including that it has been published in digital format only – both as webpages and as a PDF document. Both versions can be accessed via the Birds New Zealand website, under the Publications tab (with the pdf version published as OSNZ Occasional Publication No.1) here: https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/society-publications/occasional-publications/

The new Checklist has reduced geographical coverage. It is simply 'New Zealand', and no longer covers Norfolk Island, Macquarie Island, or the Ross Dependency of Antarctica. It also presents bird orders and families in a very different sequence to previous editions. The new sequence is closely aligned to the modern sequence used by major global checklists, including the Clements Checklist v2021 used by *eBird*.

The 2022 Checklist also gives much greater prominence to Te Reo Māori names for New Zealand birds than the 2010 Checklist did. This is based on a comprehensive list of alternative English, Māori, and Moriori names for New Zealand birds, which has been published in detail as supplementary materials (as a spreadsheet), and which is summarised as an appendix to the Checklist. Another supplementary materials spreadsheet presents the scientific name, common names, order, family, naming authority, and 2021 conservation status of all species and subspecies in the 2022 Checklist (including fossil species, and failed introductions).

The webpage version of the Checklist contains many internal and external hyperlinks that are not in the PDF version. All species are hyperlinked to their NZ Birds Online website pages, and all 6,184 citations within the Checklist have anchored hyperlinks to the relevant reference in the References webpage. From here about 82% of the references have hyperlinks to external document repositories. This means that for most quoted information, two mouse-clicks will take you from the Checklist page to the published source of the information. This References webpages is recommended as a quick way to search for and access digital copies of most historical publications that contain information on the names of New Zealand birds, including many rare books and journals.

At the species level, nearly 200 significant changes have been made since the 2010 Checklist. These include 58 additional species, 27 changes in species status, 37 changes in scientific names, 60 changes in taxon sequence, and 13 deletions. A full summary of the changes made can be found in OSNZ Occasional Publication No. 2 (Amendments to the 2010 Checklist of the birds of New Zealand).

Higher level changes include addition or resurrection of four orders (Apterygiformes, Suliformes, Odontopterygiformes, Phoenicopterygiformes), deletion of 2 orders (Casuariformes, Ciconiiformes), addition or resurrection of 7 families (Numididae, Odontophoridae, Oceanitidae, Psittaculidae, Mohouidae, Oriolidae, Locustellidae), and deletion of 6 families (Sternidae, Pelecanoididae, Psittacidae, Pachycephalidae, Turnagridae, Megaluridae).

At the genus level, we have added (or resurrected): Spatula (shovelers), Synoicus (Brown Quail), Zapornia (Spotless and Marsh crakes), Tribonyx, Xenus, Actitis, Leucophaeus, Thalasseus, Chroicocephalus (Red-billed and Black-billed gulls), Hydrobates, Ardenna (large shearwaters), Microcarbo (Little Shag), Bubulcus (Cattle Egret), Poodytes (fernbirds), Chloris (Greenfinch), and Acanthis (Redpoll). Genus names that are no longer used include Pachyanas, Philomachus, Limicola, Catharacta and Coprotheres (skuas), Procelsterna, Oceanodroma, Stictocarbo (Spotted Shag), Sceloglaux (Laughing Owl), Pachyplichas, and Bowdleria (fernbirds). Among the iconic species and subspecies that have had changes to their scientific names are: Great Spotted Kiwi | Roroa (now Apteryx maxima), Stewart Island Brown Kiwi | Rakiura Tokoeka (Apteryx australis australis), South Island Brown Kiwi | Tokoeka (Apteryx australis unnamed subspecies), Kōtuku | White Heron (Ardea alba), Kākāpō (Strigops habroptila), and South Island Kokako | Kōkā (Callaeas cinereus). The Great Spotted Kiwi requires this Latin name change, as the type specimens of A. haastii are hybrids between two other species (Rowi x Little Spotted Kiwi = Potts' Kiwi).

One previously unknown living taxon (Campbell Island Snipe) has been described, the endemic Stewart Island Shag has been split into two endemic species (Otago Shag and Foveaux Shag), two endemic subspecies of petrels have been added (Southern Cook's Petrel and Whenua Hou Diving Petrel), and 11 new vagrant species have been accepted as occurring in New Zealand as at February 2022 (Herald Petrel, Collared Petrel, Northern Fulmar, Red-footed Booby, Macquarie Island Shag, Straw-necked Ibis, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Laughing Gull, Rose-crowned Fruit Dove, Magpie-lark, and Dusky Woodswallow). The new Checklist also includes a second subspecies of Red-footed Booby (*S.s. websteri*) and two named hybrids (Potts' Kiwi and Cox's Sandpiper).

The Australian Little Penguin is recognised as present and breeding in New Zealand, and the American Whimbrel is recognised as a full species. Black Falcon has been removed from the New Zealand list, Crimson Rosella is now considered to be a failed introduction, and the Blue Shag (= southern populations of Spotted Shag) is no longer recognised as a diagnosable taxon. Royal Penguin and the extinct Waitaha Penguin are treated as subspecies (of Macaroni Penguin and Yellow-eyed Penguin respectively) rather than full species; and mainland extinct ravens are treated as subspecies of a single species that also occurred on the Chatham Islands. The reasons behind all these changes (and many more) are explained in the new Checklist.

Eight recently extinct taxa (including 2 subspecies) have been described or resurrected (2 swans, 1 duck, 2 penguins, 1 petrel, a shag, 1 parrot), and 30 species that became extinct more than circa one million years ago have been described. These comprised 2 kiwi, 1 pseudotoothed bird, 1 palaelodus, 1 pigeon, 1 adzebill, 2 rails, 2 waders, 9 penguins, 1 albatross, 1 petrel, 1 shearwater, 1 other seabird, 1 heron, 1 bittern, 4 parrots, and 1 passerine. However, Moisley's Penguin (Tereingaornis moisleyi) is no longer considered to be a diagnosable taxon. These 30 new fossil species were found in deposits of the following epochs: Paleocene (7), Eocene (1), Oligocene (2), Miocene (15), Pliocene (4), and Pleistocene (1). The richest areas for discovering new species were the lacustrine deposits of the St Bathans region of Central Otago (all 15 Miocene records), and Paleocene marine deposits of the Waipara River in North Canterbury (6 species). Four Pliocene seabirds were described from marine sediments in south Taranaki.

The new fossil species records are the first for several orders of birds in New Zealand, including Apterygiiformes (kiwi), Phoenicopteriformes (palaelodids), Pelicaniformes (herons), Charadriiformes (waders), Psittaciformes (parrots), and Passeriformes (perching birds). The 30 pre-Holocene species described since 2010 exceeds the 28 valid species described between 1859 and 2009. The total number of bird species, including fossil species, now accepted from the New Zealand region is 485.

If you wish to organise printing of your own hardcopy version of the new Checklist, please contact me for print-ready files (with correct placement of page numbers etc., plus a wrap-around cover). I can also provide indicative costing for printing 1, 5, 10 or 20 copies. One company quoted \$259 for a single copy, and \$40 each for 20 copies (excl. GST). I can provide the files, but you must organise printing yourself: (colin.miskelly@tepapa.govt.nz).

COLIN MISKELLY, CHECKLIST COMMITTEE CONVENER



➡ Flesh-footed Shearwaters on Lord Howe Island starve to death after eating plastic at sea that then blocks their digestive system: Justin Gilliam.

### Plastic ingestion by seabirds

Birds New Zealand has awarded a grant from the 2022 Projects Assistance Fund to my master's project researching how plastic pollution in the ocean changes over time and characterising seabird plastic ingestion from a sensory ecological perspective. My main study species are albatrosses, gannets and shags which have different foraging strategies. I will place contained samples of hard and soft plastics in the ocean and measure changes in colour and odour at monthly intervals, and will collect and compare the types of plastics found in faecal samples and gut contents of the study species around NZ. I will also learn more about their sensory features by performing morphological measurements and scans. Faecal samples will be collected from nesting sites to examine microplastic presence, and I will also dissect carcasses gathered by various institutions. We expect to see differences in plastic ingestion between species with different feeding behaviours as they are likely to vary in sensory sensitivities. Some plastic colours are also expected to pose more of a threat than others, depending on the spectral sensitivities of the birds. This research will fill in gaps in current knowledge about how plastics change in the ocean over time and the types of plastics being ingested by seabirds in NZ.

KAMYA PATEL, UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND

## Seabirds and attraction to artificial light

One major threat to seabird is their attraction to artificial lights. An increase in urbanisation and expansions of fisheries and cruise ship operations have led to more artificial lighting at night, which increases seabird 'fall-out'. This causes seabirds to become disorientated, leading to collisions with structures, and groundings which can be fatal or interrupt migration. I travelled with a team from Northern NZ Seabird Trust to the Hauraki Gulf to explore visitation rates of seabirds to different types of lights and conduct experiments at different locations. We found that different types of boat lights had different results at different locations. This is potentially due to differences in the seabird species composition at the different locations. Different species may have differences in sensory and visual ecology which may lead to differences in attraction to different lights. Seabird species more attracted to lights could have larger eyeballs, or differences in their spectral sensitivities due to eyeball physiology.

The Birds New Zealand Project Assistance Fund allowed us to visit Hauturu/Little Barrier Island to gather crucial data during different moon phases and expand the dataset. This helped to statistically prove that fewer seabirds are attracted to lights during a full moon compared to a new moon. We are very grateful for this funding and the results will be used for my PhD thesis and publications.

ARIEL-MICAIAH HESWELL, PhD STUDENT, UNVERISTY OF AUCKLAND & SAINT MARTIN'S UNIVERSITY (USA)

#### Why Count Dead Seabirds?

The Beach Patrol Scheme provides valuable information about the seabirds that inhabit our waters, including endangered species. While we want to keep an eye on the population of seabird species, it's very hard to identify birds when they're flying. Instead we count deceased birds that wash up on the beach, a much easier task that gives us an estimate of the total population. The data collected helps us sea how bird populations, breeding, and migration patterns are changing. It also serves as a useful resource when researching the causes of seabird deaths, both environmental and human related.



#### 9 Most Commonly Found Seabirds

Northland West (NW)	Total birds 77,090	Northland East (NE)	Total birds 29,219	
Auckland West (AW)	48,882	Auckland East (AE)	10,261	
Taranaki (TA)	15,180	Bay of Plenty (BP)	8.827	
Wellington West (WW)	33,072	Wellington South (WS)	6,845	
Canterbury North (CN)	5.331	Southland (SD)	22,530	

### Students visualise Beach Patrol data

A part of the Birds New Zealand Beach Patrol Database has proved to be an interesting dataset for study purposes by postgraduate students at Victoria University of Wellington (Master of User Experience Design/School of Design) when learning how to put their skills into action. The students worked in groups to prepare cleverly designed interactive presentations of data from the database. They used attractive graphical elements to help users explore the dataset by being able to select a region, or various bird species. An example of their work is shown above. Dr Edward Abraham, a director at Dragonfly Data Science and a Society member who selected the beach patrol data subset, and Birds New Zealand Council member Ian Armitage, met with the students and their tutor Dr Petone Groom to help interpret the data, offer guidance, and answer questions.

"The beach patrol project is now 75-years-old. A huge amount of data has been collected and is being used by staff and students at two New Zealand universities for ornithological research related to climate change and for studying other reasons for seabird mortality at sea", said Ian Armitage, who is Convenor of the Beach Patrol Scheme. "We've worked closely with Dragonfly Data Science for seven years to assemble a body of valuable, highquality Beach Patrol information into a digital database where it is securely stored and can be extracted for research. It's now much easier than before 2015 to enter data and keep it up to date. The Society is delighted that the information can be shared and used for teaching purposes like this, as well as for research."

Senior student Sarah Wilcox thanked Birds New Zealand on behalf of her fellow students for the opportunity to use the Beach Patrol dataset for teaching purposes. The Society's Beach Patrol Scheme started in 1951 (some records date from 1943) and for 70 years has aimed to systematically document the identity, location and numbers of seabirds found dead on NZ beaches.

Regular beach patrols by Society members provide a unique long-term record and the data collected has helped to establish the occurrence and to some extent the distribution of more than 110 seabird species in New Zealand coastal waters. Several rarities have been found, including Adélie Penguin and Bridled Tern. It has also provided information leading to an improved understanding of the seasonal movements, migration and causes of seabird deaths. The database is now complete up to the end of 2018. Over 28,000 record cards and record sheets have been collected by patrolling our beaches and rocky shorelines; more than 440,000 individual birds have been counted. It is the oldest of the Society's databases.



## The long night: how the Ice Age drove blue-eyed shag evolution

The first snow had started to settle on the bare ground. Soon the shag will have to make a choice. Should it stay to battle the elements and potentially face death during the long night, or attempt a perilous journey to find a new home? By the time seaice surrounds its craggy island, creeping up from the south like an army of white walkers, it may be too late.

Scientists know a lot about how the Ice Age affected animals in the landlocked Northern Hemisphere. Vast kilometre-high ice sheets covered large parts of Eurasia and North America. Animals migrated into refugia and when the ice finally released its cold grip on the world, the animals expanded back out again. In contrast, we know a lot less about how animals responded in the vast Southern Ocean. By the time I got to visit the Southern Ocean on fieldwork, you couldn't keep me off the ship's deck in the wild weather we experienced. This ocean kingdom is vast, bordered by South Africa, Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, and South America, and is dotted with isolated islands, with the frozen continent Antarctica at its heart.

During the height of the last Ice Age, the winter sea ice that surrounds Antarctica expanded out to encompass the majority of the high-latitude subantarctic islands, with permanent glacial ice and snow covering some islands. How did animals respond to this brave new world where it's not easy to just follow the herd into a refugial utopia?

Most people would think toroa albatross and penguins are the quintessential birds of the Southern Ocean. But I'm talking about their lesser-known but equally majestic cousins, the kawau blueeyed shags (*Leucocarbo spp.*). The New Zealand region (which encompasses our subantarctic islands) is a global hotspot for shags. Of the 17 types of blue-eyed shag, we have eight of them. I've been fascinated with these charismatic 'flying bricks' ever since I moved to Otago University nearly ten years ago. I can bike along the peninsula with the kids and see the Otago Shag (*L. chalconotus*) colony at Taiaroa Head, and find their ghostly bones in archaeological and fossil sites to reconstruct their biological heritage, and the impacts of humans and climate change.

Love them or hate them, shags have a fascinating story to tell and who doesn't like a mystery? On the one hand, they don't like to travel long distances or disperse – the endangered New Zealand King Shag (*L. carunculatus*) only forages up to 25 km from their colonies in Marlborough Sounds. The Otago Shag and Foveaux Shag (*L. stewarti*) are only separated by 50-100 km of ocean at their closest point. On the other hand, different species and populations of blue-eyed shags are spread throughout the islands in the vast Southern Ocean – from South America to Antarctica and the high-latitude subantarctic islands, all the way around to the New Zealand region.

Now after nearly ten years of research our international team of shag fanatics has solved the mystery and managed to reconstruct the genetic whakapapa of the group back into the depths of time. Most New Zealand birds can trace their



ancestry back to Australia. New Zealand's blue-eyed shags trace their whakapapa all the way back to South America, where the earliest members of this extended whanau, the Rock (*L. magellanicus*) and Guanay (*L. bougainvillii*) shags, still live today. Around 2.5 million years ago at the start of the Pleistocene Ice Ages, blue-eyed shags expanded out of South America, around Antarctica, and into the New Zealand region, no doubt colonising most of the isolated landmasses in the Southern Ocean, some of them literally specks of rock, like the Bounty Islands near New Zealand. But this newly formed kingdom was not to survive. Winter sea-ice and snow were on the march, and the long night was approaching.

Safe in their glacial refugia, the tupuna of today's Aotearoa blue-eyed shags rode out the repeated cold glacial and warm interglacial cycles in relative comfort, in time evolving into wellaccepted species with a deep whakapapa. The same is true for those in South America.

However, it was a different story for blue-eyed shags in Antarctica and the high-latitude subantarctic islands (think South Georgia, South Orkneys, Marion, Crozet, Kerguelen, Heard, Macquarie). Snow and ice would have covered breeding colonies – these birds are highly prone to disturbance and need bare ground to breed – and sea-ice would have prevented in-shore foraging. Eventually, these isolated outposts would have been extirpated, wiping the evolutionary slate clean for thousands of years.

Recolonisation of these islands would only have been possible once climatic conditions improved and the armies of snow and ice retreated back to their Antarctic stronghold. We suspect these biological turnover events were repeated with every glacial-interglacial cycle right up to the present day – indeed, the evolutionary history of today's blue-eyed shags in this region is probably at least four-fold shorter than those in New Zealand, with heated arguments among scientists as to whether these genetically and morphologically diverse birds constitute species, subspecies or populations.

But how did these homebody 'flying bricks' make it all the way around the Southern Ocean? Paraphrasing David Quammen, in his fascinating book about island biogeography – Song of the Dodo – he says the chances of colonising a new area in any given year is near impossible. Multiply that minuscule annual chance over eons and it's inevitable. You can imagine scenarios where Southern Ocean storms occasionally blow even the most sedentary of birds all over the place, some of which survive when they come across a fortuitously placed island

Far from playing second fiddle to penguins, blue-eyed shags have come of age, with their own fascinating story to tell. Rather than the bird some people love to hate, they can now proudly be thought of as the canary in the Southern Ocean coalmine, or the Darwin's finches of this vast ocean. Long live 'House Shag'.

This article first appeared on the *Lost Worlds*, Vanished Lives blog:

https://sciblogs.co.nz/lost-worlds/2022/03/28/the-long-nighthow-the-ice-age-drove-blue-eyed-shag-evolution/

NIC RAWLENCE, UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO



NZ wattlebird species have widely differing bill shapes and sizes: Jean-Claude Stahl/Te Papa.

## When did the Huia's bills evolve?

Huia are one of Aotearoa's most well-known birds, despite going extinct over 100 years ago. Early European scientists were fascinated by the radically different bills of the male and female Huia, a feature called sexual dimorphism. More recently scientists recognised the New Zealand wattlebird family, which includes Huia, as one of three bird families worldwide containing the most extreme variation in bills. A new study by Massey University's Gillian Gibb and Te Papa's Lara Shepherd used DNA sequences to determine when the New Zealand wattlebird family and the extraordinary sexual dimorphism in Huia evolved. Te Papa Science Researcher Lara Shepherd discusses the findings.

#### A memorable museum experience

My first introduction to Huia was as a teenager when I attended an exhibition on the species at the Te Manawa Museum in Palmerston North. The entire exhibition was fabulous but one part really resonated with me: the call of a Huia. Huia went extinct around 1907 so this was not a recording of an actual Huia call. Instead, it was an electronic-recreation, based on a recording of an imitation of Huia calls by Hēnare Hāmana. It was a sobering moment when I realised that I would never have an opportunity to hear this haunting sound in the wild.

Perhaps this moment led me to later include Huia in my PhD studies, where I attempted to determine the family tree of Huia and its relatives using DNA. For my thesis, I confirmed that the members of the New Zealand wattlebird family (Callaeidae) – Kōkako, Tīeke (Saddleback), and Huia – are closely related. However, I could only retrieve short pieces of Huia DNA, which did not contain enough information to indicate whether it was more closely related to Kōkako or to Tīeke. Fast-forward 17 years and new, more powerful DNA sequencing techniques have been developed. It is now possible to obtain huge amounts of DNA information, including from extinct species. Several studies have published numerous DNA sequences from Kōkako, Tīeke and Huia but no one had done a comparison between them... until now.

My collaborator Gillian Gibbs used her computer wizardry to combine and analyse the DNA sequences from several different studies. The results in our recently-published study clearly show Tieke and Huia to be more closely related to each other than either were to Kōkako.

Our molecular dating analysis indicates that Kōkako diverged first, around 7 million years ago. Huia and Tīeke separated from each other around 5 million years ago. At this time Aotearoa looked quite different from the present. The Southern Alps were only just starting to be uplifted and much of the southern North Island was underwater!

Other studies have shown that many of our other endemic birds also began to diverge into different species at around this time, including moa and the parrots Kākā and Kea. The similar timeframes indicate that the considerable bill variation within the wattlebird family, including the different bills of the male and female Huia, is not a result of them having longer to evolve than other New Zealand birds.

A clue to why Huia evolved sexual dimorphism in bill size and shape may come from their diet. Huia mostly ate insect larvae from rotting wood. Males chiselled into the wood and then opened their bills to wedge open the wood, whereas females probed the rotten wood with their long, curved bills.

Interestingly, sexual dimorphism in bill size and/or shape has also been observed in several unrelated bird families, although not to the extent seen in Huia, indicating that this feature has evolved independently several times. Many of these species also feed on insect larvae in wood. It has been suggested that bill dimorphism has evolved to reduce competition between the sexes by allowing them to access different foods, such as grubs at different depths in rotten logs.

Huia are long extinct. But new technologies, such as genomics and isotopes, enable scientists to continue uncovering new information about their origins and lifestyle. *Recent evolution of extreme sexual dimorphism in the huia (Heteralocha acutirostris; Callaeidae). Gillian C. Gibb and Lara D.* Shepherd. Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution, Volume 125, October 2022 [published online, 11 July 2022].

This article first appeared on Te Papa's website: <u>https://blog.</u> tepapa.govt.nz/2022/07/25/when-did-the-huias-bill-evolve/

LARA SHEPHERD, TE PAPA SCIENCE RESEARCHER



The adult Brown Creeper/Pipipi on the right was photographed feeding the juvenile Long-tailed Cuckoo/Koekoeā on the left near Lake Gunn in Fiordland on 10th March by Douglas Thorne. Koekoeā are brood parasites. In the South Island, the adult females lay their eggs in the nests of Pipipi and Mohua in November and December.



Councillors & Regional Representatives (L-R): Bruce Postill, Colin Miskelly [Councilor], Ian Armitage [Councilor], Patrick Crowe, Peter Fryer, Lynne Anderson, Ingrid Hutzler, Keith Woodley [Councillor], Ilse Corkery, Sue Frostick, Oliver Druce, Geoff Foreman, Don Goodale, Kirsten Olsen, Ian McLean, Bruce McKinlay [President], Natalie Forsdick [Vice President], Johannes Fischer. Photo: M Szabo.

### Minutes of the 82<sup>nd</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Ornithological Society of NZ

Held at Haere Roa, University of Canterbury, 4pm, 5th June 2022. **Present:** Council members: Bruce McKinlay (President), Natalie Forsdick (Vice-President), Ian Armitage, Colin Miskelly, Keith Woodley, Lynne Anderson (secretary). EO: Ingrid Hutzler and 74 members.

#### Welcome: from the President

**Apologies:** Mel Galbraith, Josie Galbraith, Paul Garner-Richards, Eleanor Gunby, Phil Rhodes, Pete McClelland, Murray Williams, Jim Jolly, Bernie Kelly, Julia Melville, Gillian Allen, Brenda Pulham, Geoff de Lisle, Dallas Bishop, Peter Frost, Ben Bell, Phil Battley.

#### **Motion:** That the apologies be accepted. Bruce McKinlay/Stuart Nicholson – Carried

#### Recent Deaths

The meeting recalled with sadness the recent deaths of Alastair Thompson, Jack Taylor, Kerry-Jayne Wilson, Martin N. Foggo, Rowley Taylor, Ruth Crockett, Terry Johnson, Tony Cartland, Ian C. Bell, and Henk Heinekamp.

#### Minutes of 2021 AGM

**Motion:** That the minutes of the last AGM in 2020, as circulated, be accepted as a true and correct record. David Lawrie/Ian Armitage - Carried

#### Matters Arising None

Treasurer's Report: The full financial report for the 2021 year is available on the Society's website (<u>https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/2021-Audited-Annual-Report.</u>

pdf). The Statements of Financial Position and Performance were displayed on screen and some printed copies made available. The Statement of Financial Performance showed a surplus of \$81,381 and the Statement of Financial Position showed net assets of \$309,322. The President went through the financial statements and relayed a written report from the Treasurer (Paul Garner-Richards) to the meeting as follows:

The 2021 accounts were completed by Paul Garner-Richards and Business Base and have been reviewed by Simon Danson (NMA Ltd). Income from NZ subscriptions was up from the previous year but there was a slight drop from overseas subscriptions. Thanks to Michael Szabo the income from advertising in the Birds New Zealand magazine have more than doubled. Printing and postage continue to be the main expenditure for the Society. We received a generous bequest from the estate of Connie Wright for which we are very grateful.

There have been a few Projects Assistance Funds grants for the year as well as the funding of the NZ Bird Atlas project. Several projects received funding from the *Birds New Zealand* Research Fund. The finance sub-committee has developed a budget and continues to investigate the most appropriate sustainable business model for the Society. Paul expressed thanks and acknowledged the support he has received from the Council,

the EO, and Membership Secretary. Bruce thanked Paul, in his absence, for his work and dedication to the Treasurer's role. **Question:** Why had the EO's fees dropped by \$11,000 since the previous year? The President replied that there had been a reduction in the EO's hours of work.

Motion: That the Treasurer's Report and financial statements be accepted. Bruce McKinlay/Natalie Forsdick – Carried Council Nominations: Lynne Anderon (Secretary) announced that from the three Council vacancies that arise each year she had received two nominations: for Colin Miskelly and Eleanor Gunby. Josie Galbraith has stood down from Council and there was still one vacancy. The President thanked Josie, in absence, for the work she had done for Council.

President's Report: Bruce McKinlay presented his annual report for the 2021 year. Matters Arising from the President's Report – Question: "If somebody sprained their ankle on an Atlasing trip, would that be regarded as an incident?" He replied: Yes, definitely, any accident or incident that happens on a field trip advertised as a Birds New Zealand event needs to be reported. Motion: The President moved that the President's report be accepted. Bruce McKinlay/Colin Miskelly – Carried No Notices of Motion had been received by the Secretary.

#### Awards: The following were awarded:

- 1. Notornis Student Author Award. Edin Whitehead: Little Shearwaters as prey for Morepork.
- 2. Notornis New Author Award. Simon Lamb: Nocturnal activity of the western Weka in an open environment.
- 3. Best Student Talk Award. **Daria Erastova**: Urban sugar water feeding is associated with infection prevalence and body condition in birds.
- 4. Best Poster Award. **Lucy Howell**: Monitoring Kororā/Little Penguin populations on Banks Peninsula using a portable MiniION sequencing device.
- 5. Peoples' Choice Poster Award. **Archie McFarlane**: Long-term consequences of genetic rescue in two bottlenecked populations of the South Island Robin.



2022 New Zealand Bird conference: M Szabo.

Meritorious Service Awards (MSAs): The President announced the following awards:

- **1 Geoff de Lisle:** In recognition of his significant contribution towards achieving the objectives of The Ornithological Society of New Zealand, in particular, as Wellington Regional Representative, and improving the functionality of the NZ Birds Online website.
- **2 Dallas Bishop**: In recognition of her dedicated work searching for, testing, and installing more than 2,000 weblinks on NZ Birds Online, to greatly increase the functionality of the website.
- **3 Shaun Lee:** In recognition of his work on the Society's website, logo, and 2022 Checklist covers.
- **4 Geoff Norman:** In recognition of his work formatting the first two OSNZ Occasional Publications (Checklist documents), which total more than 400 pages of formatting.
- **5 Tom Moynihan**: In recognition of his work crafting the 'look' of the Checklist webpages, and building the functional links between NZ Birds Online and the Checklist webpages.

#### **Robert Falla Memorial Award**

This was awarded to Graeme Taylor to a standing ovation (see below).

**General Business** None. Peter Fryer (Taranaki RR) reminded everyone the next conference/AGM will be held in New Plymouth on Queen's Birthday weekend 2023 and that he hoped to see many members attend. The meeting closed at: 4.45pm.



President Bruce McKinlay presenting the award to Graeme Taylor: Nick Allen.

### Robert Falla Memorial Award 2022 – Graeme Taylor

Graeme Taylor graduated from Canterbury University in 1985 with a M.Sc degree in Zoology. A feature of his scientific career has been studying birds in remote locations, notably on islands, and sometimes one gains the impression that the more remote the islands where he worked, the more satisfied he was with his studies! Graeme has made, and continues to make, a substantial contribution to ornithology both through his employment in the Department of Conservation (DOC), and voluntarily as a member of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand.

An early topic of Graeme's studies was research on the distribution, ecology and behaviour of rats on Campbell Island, an essential step to provide a strong knowledge base for planning and implementing an ambitious programme to effectively eliminate this pest from the island. At the same time, a 12-month stay on the island was a marvellous opportunity for him to become familiar with a range of seabirds there, notably albatrosses and penguins. Since then, he has worked on more than 30 species of seabirds on most offshore and remote subtropical and subantarctic islands in New Zealand over a period of nearly 40 years, gaining an immense amount of knowledge that he has willingly shared with others; much of his

studies has been published in the Society's journal Notornis, and many international scientific journals.

Graeme is now the Principal Science Advisor in the Science and Policy Group in the Department of Conservation. His various past roles in DOC have covered a range of responsibilities including animal pest management, endangered species research, conservation ecology and biology of seabirds. He has always been, and continues to be, a very 'hands-on' practical and observant scientist who has effectively solved problems in the field concerning data collection and monitoring wherever he has worked. He has been, and continues to be, the leading seabird advisor in DOC for nearly 25 years. Particularly noteworthy studies guided by Graeme concerned the recovery of the critically endangered Chatham Island Taiko and the endangered Chatham Island Petrel. For the past 30 years Graeme has regularly observed Grey-faced Petrels that roost and breed on Ihumoana and Kauwahaia Islands at Bethells Beach, West Auckland, thus providing a valuable and continuous record of the ecology and breeding behaviour of this species, which has informed conservation management of related and more endangered petrel species.

Graeme was a member of a small team in the Threatened Species Unit within DOC in the 1990s that aimed to give threatened species, including birds, a greatly enlarged conservation profile. A significant contribution made by Graeme was the formulation of DOC's Action Plan for Seabird Conservation in New Zealand, published in 2000. The action plan has had enduring value through strengthening the policy and operational basis for conservation planning of many seabird species; indeed, the effectiveness of the action plan is testament to Graeme's practical knowledge and his dedication to seabird research over many years. Graeme managed the Banding Office in DOC for a period in the mid-2000s during which time he introduced a basis for digital record keeping and analysis of banded bird records. He outlined the proposed improvements at the Society conference held in Hamilton in 2005. This work was the forerunner to the current FALCON data management system.

For the past 15 years Graeme's professional efforts have included the tracking of 15 species of seabirds to assess their movement patterns, habitat utilisation at sea and studies of several burrow nesting species of seabirds, and providing advice on the methods used to assess population size and monitor trends in seabird populations. Graeme has always been an enthusiastic mentor of early career seabird scientists and conservation managers, and has provided numerous opportunities for Society members to participate is seabird field programmes. His effective networking is evident from the diversity of projects and publications where he has provided input, in addition to those that he has led. In a recognition of Graeme's wide knowledge and experience in the ornithology of seabird species, especially petrels, he is the NZ Government and Oceania representative on the Scientific Council of the UN Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species.

Graeme's contributions to the effective running of this Society are considerable. He was a member of Council for several years in the 1990s, and has been a long-term member of the Scientific Committee since 1997, assuming the role of Convenor in 2019. Graeme compiled Classified Summarised Notes between 1990 and 1994, and co-authored the publication of this series of Notes during this period. He was a co-convenor of the national Red-billed Gull census project (2014–2016), and assisted with the monitoring of King Shag populations and breeding populations since 2015. He was a convenor of the Society's Beach Patrol Scheme during the 1990s and co-authored papers that were published in Notornis each year that reported and discussed the findings of the scheme between 1993 and 2004. Graeme was also a member of the Rare Birds Committee (now Records Appraisal Committee) from 1997 to 2003.

Against some opposition within the Council at the time, Graeme provided the inspiration and drive to include two scientific days into the Society's annual conference held in Wellington in 2006; this two-day event has been a popular and well-established feature of our conferences ever since which enables an increasingly wide range of studies to be presented in addition to providing opportunities for young career scientists to speak and meet experienced researchers.

Graeme has written or co-authored more than 100 scientific papers, books, and book chapters plus numerous reports for DOC, mostly on seabird research topics. He authored or co-authored 44 papers published in *Notornis* since 1986.

Council is satisfied that the nominination meets the two primary requirements for making this prestigious award, namely, (i) valuable contributions to the study of birds in the New Zealand Region, and (ii) sustained service to the Ornithological Society of New Zealand. Accordingly, Council has determined that Graeme Taylor shall be presented with a Robert Falla Memorial Award for the year 2022.



Travis Wetlands/Christchurch (8/6): Greg McKenzie..



Eastern Rockhopper Penguin near The Nuggets/Otago (20/4): Oscar Thomas.



Drake Northern Shoveler, Pegasus Wetlands/Christchurch (10/6): Adam Colley.



(7/6) - Kahu Bennett.

## **Bird** News

Some sightings have not received official acceptance by Birds New Zealand's Records Appraisal Committee (1st March 2022 – 1st September 2022).

Hoary-headed Grebes continue to be seen at Lake Elterwater with up to 5 reported between March and August. A raft of rare duck reports included an unconfirmed sighting of 5 Plumed Whistling Ducks at Oraka Beach (Mahia Peninsula) on 19/4. A drake **Northern Shoveler** in breeding plumage was seen regularly at Pegasus Wetlands in Christchurch from 25/4 to 3/8, including displaying to a female Australasian Shoveler. There were 5 reports of possible Chestnut Teal. One found at Grovetown Lagoon Walkway in Marlborough on 24/3 was seen repeatedly until 29/5. A possible drake was at Saltwater Creek (Timaru) on 3/6. A drake was seen regularly at Travis Wetlands from 6/6 to 19/7 associating with a possible female Chestnut Teal. One observer photographed them mating. A possible drake was photographed at Aramoana Saltmarsh on 12/6, and another possible drake reported at Playhouse Ponds near Mapua on 19/7 with 8 Australian Wood Ducks. An unconfirmed possible Black Kite was also reported near Clevedon (South Auckland) on 24/4.

Seabird reports included an injured juvenile **Erect-crested Penguin** on a Kaikoura beach on 6/3 that was taken into care that was released safely 6 weeks later. An **Eastern Rockhopper Penguin** was seen ashore near The Nuggets in Otago 20/4. A sick **Snares Crested Penguin** was taken into care on 21/5. Diagnosed with avian malaria, it recovered after treatment and was released back into the wild. A possible **Magellanic Penguin** was filmed swimming in Evans Bay (Wellington) on 11/7. If accepted, this will be the third NZ record.

An injured **Light-mantled Sooty Albatross** grounded near Dannevirke on 14/6 was euthanised. Another was found deceased on the coast at Okarito in July. A deceased **Matsudaira's Storm Petre**l was found on Muriwai Beach on 27/5. If accepted, this will be the first NZ record of this species. A Softplumaged Petrel was seen off Birdling's Flat on 21/5, and then a storm-wrecked bird was taken into care at Wildbase, Massey University, in Palmerston North (7–14/6) where it recovered and was released back into the wild. Two Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, 1-2 Soft-plumaged Petrels, and 1 **White-headed Petrel** were seen during a seawatch from the Pukerua Bay headland on 11/6.

Pelagic birdwatching trips from Moeraki out over the Otago Canyons recorded 1 Short-tailed Shearwater and 1 Antarctic Prion (25/6), 1 Grey-backed Storm Petrel (25+26/6), and 3 Grey Petrels (26/6). Further north, an immature Grey-headed Albatross and 1 Wilson's Storm Petrel were seen on a pelagic trip out past the Mokohinau Islands (8/5). Pelagic trips from Tutukaka out past the Poor Knights Islands recorded 3 Wilson's Storm Petrels (9/4); 16 Campbell Albatross, 1 Wilson's Storm Petrel, and 18 Grey Ternlets (9/5); 1 Campbell Albatross and 1 Wilson's Storm Petrel (22/5); 1 Providence Petrel, 2 Antarctic Prions and 2 Campbell Albatross (10/7); and 2 Antarctic Prions (30/7). A pelagic trip from Gisborne out to the Hikurangi Trench recorded 1 Grey-backed Storm Petrel and 4-5 Grey Petrels on 17/7. Pelagic trips from Westport recorded 3 Campbell Albatross (23/7) and 2 Greybacked Storm Petrels (24/7). A Muriwai beach patrol recorded 1 Blue Petrel, 1 Antarctic Prion, and 1 Hutton's Shearwater on 9/7. A long-staying Brown Booby was seen regularly at Muriwai gannet colony from 27/12 to 1/5, and there was an unconfirmed report of 2 possible tropicbirds sp. from Mangapai in Whangarei Harbour on 18/7.

Four **Cattle Egrets** were seen near Parakai on 28/5, then 11 near Hart's Creek on 6/6, and 10 at Maketu on 29/7. Single **Little Egrets** were seen at Saltwater Creek in Timaru (27/3), Weymouth Wharf on the Manukau (28/5), and Manawatu Estuary at Foxton (4/7). An unconfirmed possible **Intermediate Egret** was reported at Kaituna Lagoon, Birdlings Flat, on 18/6. A **Glossy Ibis** was at Arahura Valley (West Coast) on 15/4, and an Australasian Bittern was at Long Bay (Okura) on 6/6.



Wader reports included a **Hudsonian Godwit** in breeding plumage seen at Ambury Regional Park from 30/4 to 29/6. Another in non-breeding plumage was at Aramoana Saltmarsh on 12/6, and a **Black-tailed Godwit** in breeding plumage was at Miranda on 18/7 and 31/7. A **Grey-tailed Tattler** was at Manawatu Estuary sandspit on 6/3. Another was at Ambury Regional Park from 1/3 to 16/7, and another was at Kauri Mountain Beach near Whangarei Heads on 23/5. A long-staying **Wandering Tattler** first seen on Proctors Beach near Whangarei Heads on 22/1 was still present on 31/7.

A Greater Sand Plover at Kidd's Shellbank (restricted access) on the Manukau on 6/3 was joined by a second bird on 18/3, and then on its own again on 1/4. Another 1 was seen at Big Sand Island on the Kaipara on 31/3 and 2/4. There were reports of Sanderlings at Mangawhai on 5/3, Ashley Estuary on 12/3 and 20/3, and Embankment Road/Lake Ellesmere on 15/3. A Terek Sandpiper was at Manakapua/Big Sand Island from 6/3 to 5/5, and another was seen with 3 Southern NZ Dotterels and 17 Red-necked Stints at the head of Awarua Bay on 21/3. Another was reported The Western Sandpiper found at Cliffton Beach, Whitford (Auckland) on 15/2 stayed until 26/2.

A **South Polar Skua** and a **Pomarine Skua** were seen 5-nautical miles off Westport on 14/3. A pelagic trip from Tutukaka out past the Poor Knights Islands recorded 2 Brown Skuas on 9/5. A Brown Skua and a Pomarine Skua were also seen offshore from the northern end of the Pukerua Bay headland on 11/6.

An unusual record was a **Grey Ternlet** at sea off Westport on 14/3. A breeding plumage **Australian Gull-billed Tern** was regular at Motueka Spit from 3/4 to 13/8, and 1 was seen in flight at Tahuna Beach Holiday Park, Nelson, on 3/6. A deceased beachcast **Bridled Tern** was found on a beach patrol along Muriwai Beach on 26/3, and there was an unconfirmed report of a possible **Grey-backed Tern** at Mangaone Estuary/Te Horo Beach (Kapiti Coast) on 11/3.

A **Whiskered Tern** found in breeding plumage in Awarua Bay on 21/3 was followed by an immature Whiskered Tern seen repeatedly at New River Estuary (Invercargill) from 25/6 to 20/7.





Immature Arctic Tern at Waikanae Sandspit (28/4): Michael Szabo

A White-winged Black Tern in non-breeding plumage was reported at Waikanae Estuary sandspit on 21-22/3, 27/4, 30/4 and 1/5. Another 1 in non-breeding plumage repeatedly seen between the Tukituki River mouth at Haumoana and Waitangi Regional Park near Clive since December 2021 was still present on 30/7.

There was a **Little Tern** at Waikanae Sandspit on 19/3 and 22-28/3, and 1-2 on the Hawke's Bay coast between Haumoana and Waitangi Regional Park from 9/4 to 7/8. Four were seen on shellbanks in New River Estuary on 13/5, another 1 with 4 NZ Fairy Terns on the Kaipara on 17/4, and 9 at Big Sand Island (Kaipara) on 5/5. Another 1 was at the tip of Kaitorete Spit on 10/6 and 1 on Monaco Peninsula in Nelson on 15/7.

An unprecedented number of **Common Tern** sightings were reported during the first half of 2022, mostly in the Wellington and Manawatu regions, all with White-fronted Tern flocks. Although an exact number is difficult to arrive at, it seems there may have been 10–20 birds. There were single birds in nonbreeding plumage at Manawatu Estuary (Foxton) on 8/1, Kereta Bay on Coromandel Peninsula (18/1); Waikanae Sandspit (23/1); Manawatu Estuary (24/1); Plimmerton (8/2); Maketu Spit (14/2); 2 together at Lake Ferry the same day; 1 at Pukerua Bay (19/2); and 1 on rocks next to Plimmerton Fire Station (13-14/3).

One was photographed in full breeding plumage at Plimmerton on 20-21/3. Found by Alan Tennyson, it had a dull red base to its bill. He noted that *HANZAB* says that birds with this feature originate from central Siberia and represent the western population of the longipennis subspecies. This bird was also observed in courtship display with a White-fronted Tern on 21/3.

Then a Common Tern in non-breeding plumage was photographed at Mermaid Rocks in Island Bay (Wellington) on 26/3, and another at Manawatu Estuary on 24-26/3. A possible Common Tern in non-breeding plumage was reported with 32 NZ Fairy Terns and 4 Little Terns on Big Sand Island on the Kaipara on 2/4, and a Common Tern in near full breeding plumage was seen at Manawatu Estuary on 3/4.



1. Erect-crested Penguin at Kaikoura (6/3): Sabrina Luecht., 2. Terek Sandpiper with NZ Fairy Terns, Big Sand Island (6/3): Darren Markin, 3. Pomarine Skua at sea off Westport (14/3): Steve Wood, 5. Greater Sand Plover on Manukau Harbour (18/3): Phil Hammond, 6. Australian Gull-billed Tern at Motueka Sandspit (16/6): Bradley Shields, 7. Glossy Ibis at Arahura Valley/West Coast (15/4): Angela Torrie, 8. Australasian Bittern in Long Bay/Auckland (6/6): Mitch De Beer.

One in non-breeding plumage was at Milnthorpe Beach in Golden Bay on 6-7/4. Then 1 in near full breeding plumage was seen at Milnethorpe beach in Golden Bay on 8/4, followed by 1 in full breeding plumage at Pakawau in Golden Bay on 9/4. One in full breeding plumage was also seen the same day at Waikanae Sandspit. Then 1 in full breeding plumage was seen at Milnthorpe Beach in Golden Bay on 11/4. Finally, a possible Common Tern in non-breeding plumage was photographed on rocks at Te Raekaihau Point in Island Bay Marine Reserve (Wellington) on 23/4. The first NZ record of Common Tern was in 1984 and there has not been a single NZ record of 1 in the NZ beach patrol scheme since it began in the 1940s. An immature **Arctic Tern** photographed at Waikanae Sandspit with a Whitefronted Tern flock on 28/4 was seen again there on 30/4.

Sources: *eBird* NZ, Unusual Bird Reports, BirdingNZ Forum, Regional Roundup, New Zealand Birders Facebook group, iNaturalist NZ.

## Whenua Hou Diving Petrel /Kuaka increase

The 2021 breeding season was a bumper one for the critically endangered Whenua Hou Diving Petrel/Kuaka. There were 210

adults in 2021, up 5% on previous years, and it was the most successful on record with 55-60 chicks fledged instead of the usual 50-55, another 10% increase. Whenua Hou is predator-free, but other threats to Kuaka include light pollution from vessels, competition with other seabirds, rising sea levels,



and increased storms and storm surges which damage the sand dunes they breed in. Conservation work through a collaboration between Ngāi Tahu and DOC is underway to further secure the species.

### **New Members**

Birds New Zealand warmly welcomes the following new members: 'Friends of Mana' and 'Helps Pohatu Conservation Trust (group members); Richard Hawkins (Far North); Maree Johnston; Glenda Dykes; Ana Menzies; Chris Wedding; Jonathan Turner; Gaia Dell'Ariccia; Pamela Julian; Paul Whitfield (Auckland); Suzanne (South Auckland); Deborah S Smith; Caiden Binzegger (Waikato); Richard Verrill (Bay of Plenty); Ronél Marais; Chris Dodd (Taranaki); Anoop (Taranaki); Will Foley; Susan Hunsberger (Hawke's Bay); Eliana Ramos; Christopher Tuffley (Manawatu); Ossona de Mendez; Mike Hermansson; Oskar Ehrhardt; Abby Davenport; Lyndy McIntyre; Helen Duncan: John McKov: Susie Mills: Mariska M Deventer (Wellington); Sacha O'Brien; Tracey Murray; Kiri Langvad; Sharen E Graham; Matt Moss (Nelson); Gary Scott (Marlborough); Laura Roe; Henry Roe; Averil Parthonnaud; Tori Rowley; Stephanie Kerrisk: Vanessa Kennard; Kevin Parthonnaud; Jessica Helps; Anna Gardiner; Megan Farley; Lucy Howell; Brett Curry; Wendy Fox; Hazel Holmes (Canterbury); Clare Gunton; Zohara Rafi; Angela Knight; Nick Dunckley; Ingrid Dunckley (Otago); Sean Jacques (Southland), Andre Nel; Johannes Chambon (Rest of World).

#### Donations

Birds New Zealand thanks the following for their donations: Kiri Langvad, Laura Roe, Matt Moss, Mike Hermansson, Susan Hunsberger, John Black, Barry Foster, Gillian Ward, James Savage, Carren Jones, Ellen Webb, Pauline Priest, Jean Fleming, and Oliver Aughton.





Ambury Regional Park guided bird walk (17/7): Denise Poyner.



Auckland RR Ian McLean and the Society's Librarian Trina Smith, post-conference field trip, Ashley Estuary (6/6): Denise Poyner.

#### FAR NORTH

A large number of Little Penguins washed up dead on beaches around the Far North in May, so we were very pleased that our beach patrol along 90 Mile Beach on 27/7 found no dead penguins. There have been reports from the Bay of Islands that Little Penguins have been heard calling, so they have not all died. The beach patrol was carried out after a spell of gales. We saw very few gulls, with 25 Red-billed compared to 194 in April and 129 Black-backed compared to 680 in April. but SIPO numbers were similar both months.

Many bird restoration projects are being conducted and helped by Birds New Zealand members. In the Bay of Islands, there has been monitoring on Moturoa Island for 40 years (see December 2022 issue of Notornis). This winter was the first that observers have been there. Lots of North Island Brown Kiwi were captured by surveillance cameras, breeding Grev-faced Petrels were out in good numbers on the monitored colony, and Popokotea (Whitehead) numbers have continued to increase.

The 7 main islands on the eastern side of the Bay (Ipipiri) have been pest mammal free since 2009. DOC's successful pest surveillance programme there is being taken over by Project Island Song. Red-crowned Kākāriki were reintroduced to Moturua Island in June 2017. The population is establishing, and has started to disperse to other islands. A second translocation was carried out to Urupukapuka in June 2021. Observers have also seen kākāriki on Cape Brett/Rakaumangamanga and the Russell Peninsula. Tieke (Saddleback) are also doing well. The next count is in January 2023. Please contact Richard Robbins if you want to join in:

#### (richard@projectislandsong.co.nz).

Kevin Matthews has this advice for any members or birders wishing to visit the Kokota Sandspit, also known as Parengarenga Sandspit: "This is privately-owned land and is managed as a Heritage Asset under the Te Runanga Nui Te Aupouri Trust. It is important that Birds New Zealand maintain a good relationship with the Runanga and as such any visits to the Sandspit need to be arranged beforehand. Please contact the Far North Branch (kble@xtra.co.nz) as a first point of contact to arrange a visit; that is if you intend crossing over the inner entrance of the harbour by boat to the Sandspit."

#### NORTHLAND

Tony Beauchamp gave us an overview of his research into waders in Whangarei Harbour in May, Les Feasey visited from Kerikeri in June to give us a great talk on waders in the Far North, and Adrian Riegen gave us an excellent talk in July on godwit migration. Members participated in 5-minute bird counts for Tiakina Whangarei, a community-led conservation project in urban Whangarei in June. Individuals or pairs then committed to completing counts in various areas of bush throughout Whangarei.

As usual, lots of fabulous seabirds were seen on the 'Petrel Station' pelagic birding trips from Tutukaka organised by Scott Brooks with highlights including multiple species of albatross, up to 30 NZ Storm Petrels at once, 3 Wilson's Storm Petrels, 67 Grey Ternlets, and a big Hapuka that tried to eat a young Buller's Shearwater at the surface! Northland's winter atlasing effort to date has been concentrated on the east coast near Mangawhai, Whangarei, and Kerikeri. The main data gaps are in areas around Waipoua forest and Pouto Peninsula, and Mangakahia valley. In the Far North there are gaps around Herekino, Ahipara, Kaitaia, and a few squares on the Aupouri Peninsula. We will look to - ILSE CORKERY target these areas in 2023.

#### AUCKLAND

Our Ambury Park guided bird walks continue to be well-supported by the public with 35 people joining our guides on 17/7. Highlights included 15 Northern NZ Dotterels, 900 SIPO, 200 Wrybill, 1 Whimbrel and an impressive 249 Royal Spoonbills. Our Michael Taylor Memorial guided walk in Cornwall Park on 22/5 recorded 20 species, including 12 Common Pheasants. A Waitemata Harbour count on 19/6 found 51 Banded Dotterel and 41 Wrybill at Orangihina Te Atatu. A total of 24 people took part in the south Kaipara census on 18/6. Highlights included 12,376 SIPO, 3,335 Pied Stilt, 531 Banded Dotterel, 149 Wrvbill, 1.980 Bar-tailed Godwit, 1 Eastern Curlew, 497 Royal Spoonbill, 10 NZ Fairy Tern, 2 Little Tern and 184 Black-billed Gulls.

Beach patrols of Muriwai Beach were sometimes very light with only 2 Little Penguins found on 11/6. With more unsettled weather in July and August the numbers of birds found increased. A total of 28 birds of 10 species were found on 9/7 including 1 Blue - ISABELLA GODBERT & CJ RALPH Petrel, 1 Hutton's Shearwater, 10 Fluttering Shearwaters, 1 Little Shearwater, and 2 Pied

Shags (which had been shot). Another on 6/8 found 22 birds of 7 species including 1 Cape Petrel and 14 Fairy Prions.

Notable local sightings included a Longtailed Cuckoo in a Mt Eden garden by Graham Jones (3/6), and 2 prions found grounded, likely as a result of bright light disorientation on cloudy nights. An Antarctic Prion in Glen Eden (26/6) and a Broad-billed Prion on Queen Street (22/7) were both taken into care at BirdCare Aotearoa. A very rare sighting for Auckland was an immature NZ Falcon at North Shore Memorial Park on 21/7, found by Samantha Kingston and reported via the Birds Auckland Facebook page. This has given hope that it has siblings that may also be present in the region. The most impressive find was a deceased Matsudaira's Storm Petrel on Muriwai Beach by Susan and John Anderson (27/5). This was kept as a specimen and will likely be recorded as NZ's first record of this - IAN McLEAN species.

#### SOUTH AUCKLAND

In May, Mick Clout gave us a talk on Kereru. He has looked at data from the 2 previous bird census counts and found that the North Island population remained relatively stable while numbers declined in the South Island. He says this may be due to rat eruptions that occur in beech forests. Several radio-tagging projects have confirmed that Kereru cross Foveaux Strait, sometimes more than once a day. Another bird flew from Central Auckland to Helensville (35km), back to the city, then back to Helensville and on to Leigh (another 46km).

Our June speaker was Alex Flavell-Johnson, Conservation Manager at Te Arai Links (Mangawhai), where endangered birds are being monitored, including circa 10 pairs of NZ Dotterel which breed on the golf course. Our July speaker was Dr Daria Erastova. who gave us a talk about her research on backyard sugar water feeding. She concluded that while it may help birds through lean periods, it should not be made available when other food sources, such as flowering trees. are available. She found the likelihood of lice infection in Silvereyes was lower in gardens with feeders, and at feeders with higher sugar concentrations (20%). Similar results applied to Tui.

A June Karioitahi beach patrol found 3 Little Penguins, 4 diving petrels sp., 1 Little Shearwater, 2 Fairy Prions, 1 Thin-billed Prion, 2 Australasian Gannets, and a Paradise Shelduck. Interesting sightings from May







Wandering Tattler on Proctors Beach, Whangarei Heads (17/2): Hayden Pye.

Black-browed Albatross seen during a pelagic trip off Gisborne (17/7): Malcolm Rutherford

to July include 13 Banded Dotterel at Port Waikato and 40 at Puhinui Reserve, and 21 NZ Dotterel near Kaiaua School. 30 Sulphurcrested Cockatoos were reported in Pukekawa and sightings around Miranda included 1 of 137 birds feeding on maize paddocks. A NZ Falcon was seen in the Hunua Ranges, where 229 pairs of NI Kokako are now present, and Kaka are also spreading. We continue to get reports of Kaka around Kohekohe in Awhitu. Australasian Bitterns were seen at Hoods Landing on the Waikato and at Karaka, and 1 has recently been a regular sight at Miranda. – SUE FROSTICK

#### WAIKATO

In June, John Innes gave us a talk about the movements of forest birds. After a rather dry, warm autumn our region had a lot of rain in winter. The region's farm paddocks saw a lot of surface flooding. Some sites attracting hundreds of water birds such as ducks, stilts, and herons. The Whangamarino area, the Tahuna-Paeroa Road, Te Aroha, Ohaupo, and Lake Ngaroto have been particularly productive. Highlights included 400+ Pied Stilt, several pure-looking Grey Ducks, a pair of Black-billed Gulls, and a couple NZ Dabchick at Kopuku, several Cattle Egret and 8 Caspian Tern along SH1 near Whangamarino, an Australasian Bittern in a paddock at Patetonga, 2 Red-billed Gulls, and a pair of NZ Scaup at Te Aroha.

There were over 900 Mallards at Hamilton Lake in June, and at least 1 NZ Dabchick continues there. Kaka continue to be seen regularly, including at Te Aroha, Morrinsville, and Hamilton, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos have been spotted in the Raglan area again this winter. A fickle yet glorious-looking male Black-tailed Godwit in breeding plumage at Miranda has delighted lucky birders this winter, Further east, near the Piako River mouth, where earthworks have brought the former roost site back to life, a pair of Black-fronted Dotterels (rare for Waikato) were seen. A large Australasian Shoveler flock in the thousands is present once again on Lake Waikare (Huntly) this winter, and at least 1 White Heron has been seen regularly along the river lagoons behind a Huntly supermarket.

- KEN WEDGWOOD & RUSSELL CANNINGS

#### BAY OF PLENTY

In June, Caiden Binzegger of Hamilton—one of Aotearoa's youngest birders—tagged along with his father's fishing trip to Waihau

Bay (Cape Runaway) and spotted a couple Campbell Albatross, a White-capped Albatross, good numbers of Cape Petrel, and a possible Black Petrel. Back on land, Weka continue to increase around urban Whakatane with birds being seen and heard now to the west, and there have even been credible reports surfacing from the eastern reaches of the Rotorua District, so who knows where the expansion will take them? The Waioeka Gorge has been a Weka stronghold in recent years, but also of note in that area was a Blue Duck seen by Malcolm Rutherford on 29/7 a few kms downstream from the Waioeka settlement. A few Brown Ouail have been seen in the district, including a small group near Whakatane Airport by Erik Forsyth, and south of Edgecumbe by Fraser Gurney.

Both White Heron and Cattle Egret are being seen this winter, with the former showing up as singletons around the Kaituna wetlands and estuary, Thornton Lagoon, and Whakatane WTP ponds. A group of 10 Cattle Egrets have been floating around the Kaituna wetlands and Maketu estuary area. Black-fronted Terns continue to show up sporadically in small numbers at Thornton River mouth, and Matthew McDougall spotted a storm-blown White-fronted Tern on Lake Rotorua on 10/7. Marsh Crake continue to be heard (and seen by those lucky enough) along the Waikareao Walkway in Tauranga. Kaka have been sporadically encountered too, and Aongatete (near Katikati) continues to be one of the few reliable sites for Rifleman this side - RUSSELL CANNINGS of the Kaimais.

#### GISBORNE/WAIROA

Malcolm Rutherford and I were invited to Waingake by Gisborne District Council to survey for North Island Brown Kiwi. We went out at dusk and listened for calls for a few hours, all rugged up for the cold. No calls were heard but it was a worthwhile exercise in establishing a base for future monitoring. The council plan on repeating this survey in future. A small group of us did our winter wader survey at Te Wherowhero on 8/7. Several of us were among 12 birders that joined a pelagic trip off Gisborne organised by Sav Saville on 17/7. Highlights among the 15 tubenose seabird species we recorded included seeing 7 species of albatross, 4-5 Grey Petrels, and 1 Grey-backed Storm Petrel. The weather was sunny and the sea was calm for the pelagic trip, but it has been very wet in our region this winter with many roads

adversely affected. At the moment we are looking at some Atlas surveys including some remote sites in our region.

- GEOFF FOREMAN

#### TARANAKI

Two of us joined May's 'Global Big Day', camping overnight at Lake Rotokare, where NI Brown Kiwi were heard and seen, and Ruru were numerous. We then tripped around the countryside, out to the coast, finishing back at Lake Mangamahoe where the Australasian Little Grebe failed to show. We recorded 60 species. The weather didn't look too good for our June field trip to Lake Mangamahoe, but 1 hardy individual enjoyed 2 hours watching Grey Duck, Kereru, Kotare, Eastern Rosella and other species before the weather turned. At July's meeting I gave a brief resumé of the AGM in Christchurch. There were many highlights and it was good to spend time with like-minded people. The weather was very co-operative for the field trips. At Pegasus Wetlands the long-staying Northern Shoveler was seen along with numerous other waterfowl, then at the Ashley/Rakiura River Estuary a few Bar-tailed Godwits were seen along with Black-fronted Terns, Royal Spoonbills, Grey Teals, a few Wrybills, and Banded Dotterels.

Barry Hartley has advised us all to check carefully around the edges of roosting Whitefronted Tern flocks as other tern species sometimes associate with them. During his regular tours around the coast he saw and photographed a huge flock of Fluttering Shearwaters close to the coast road in South Taranaki. We estimated it at 20,000 birds plus a few gannets. He also saw a flock of 15 Black Shags together at sea. While cleaning out his freezer, Ron Lambert found a deceased Black Noddy which had been found alive on a street close to the coast in New Plymouth on 3/3/08, but subsequently died. June's field trip was a morning ramble along the bush clad side of the Huatoki Stream. Blackbird and NZ Fantail were numerous, Grey Warbler heard, and Tui and Kereru seen along with assorted other species. In early July productivity dropped dramatically on my building site close to Barret Lagoon as 3 Kaka - squawking, whistling, and flying about - grabbed my attention. They have been around all month now.

Several members took part in the annual NZ Garden Bird Survey. A bittern was seen at a local wetland and NZ Dabchick at Lake Mangamahoe. Seventy-one Pateke have been **REGIONAL ROUNDUP** 

released at Lake Rotokare, bolstering numbers there. Planning for the 2023 AGM is going well. Dr Phil Battley has kindly offered to organise the scientific days and Sue Frostick is assisting with registrations. - PETER FRYER Black-fronted Dotterels on the shingle. We

#### WHANGANUI

Winter is an uncertain season in coastal Whanganui. Northern hemisphere migrants have long left for their Arctic breeding grounds, and the late-summer flurry of South Island migrants (ie, Wrybill, SIPO, Royal Spoonbill), moving through to their northern New Zealand wintering grounds has largely ended. High river flows in winter deposit slugs of fresh sediment in the estuary. Combined with strong south-westerly winds that churn up the sediments, these make the estuary somewhat inhospitable for waterbirds. Maximum numbers recorded in recent months were 12 SIPO, 16 Pied Stilt, 7 Caspian Tern and 11 Royal Spoonbill. Even these numbers fluctuate, indicative perhaps of local movement among regional waterbodies.

Consequently, our most active birders almost all photographers - focus largely on land birds. Each winter, we get an influx of certain inland species, among them Kākā. For the last 15 years, mainly between July and October, we've recorded 1 or more Kākā. The best year was 2010, when at least 4 birds were seen at Rotokawau Virginia Lake, along with sightings of singletons more widely, which could have been additional individuals. Where do they come from? How old are they, and what gender? This is where photographs are invaluable. Kākā are not easy to age and sex outside the hand. This is where photographs help, as they can be examined closely and repeatedly. This year we've had at least 2 Kākā roaming around. When first seen at Bason Botanic Garden in June, they triggered 'The Great Kākā Hunt' among our foremost bird photographers who, frustratingly, despite numerous visits, never managed to find them there, although other people did. Fortunately, by July, seemingly the same birds had relocated to Rotokawau Virginia Lake, allowing the photographers to catch up with them.

Paul Gibson, Jim Norris and Ormond Torr took many photographs, which have helped answer some of our questions. One bird has a substantially bigger culmen than the other-a male. Both have grey ceres, grey bare skin around the eyes, and narrow yellow orbital rings, indicating birds less than 1 year old. Examining these features in photos taken in previous years shows that, with only 1 exception, all birds have been juveniles, presumably dispersing from their natal areas. Most likely they come from forests in the interior, but 1 banded bird photographed in Waverley in 2008 was banded the previous year at Zealandia in Wellington. This is 'jigsaw ornithology', building a bigger picture out of - PETER FROST disparate pieces.

#### HAWKE'S BAY

After a hiatus in March and April, 8 members visited White Pine Bush, Tangoio Beach, and Waipatiki Beach in May where highlights included a Whitehead/Pōpokotea at White Pine Bush, and 11 Fluttering Shearwaters/ Pakahā seen from Waipatiki Beach. Late June and early July saw 9 people complete a curtailed wader census, and we held our AGM in early July, which was well-attended by 13 members. Our July field trip saw 11 people travel first to Patangata, where we had good views of Banded Dotterels/Pohowera and Black-fronted Dotterels on the shingle. We then visited scenic Elsthorpe Reserve to walk the loop track, where we heard several groups of Eastern Rosellas. We finished at Horseshoe Lake on Mangarara Farm and enjoyed the hospitality of Greg and Rachel Hart who generously let us use the lodge to observe NZ Dabchicks/Weweia and NZ Scaup/Pāpango.

Haumoana and surrounds yielded continued sightings of a White-winged Black Tern, and up to 15 Black-fronted Terns/ Tarapirohe, 3 Little Terns/Tara Teo, 16 Caspian Terns/Taranui, 750 White-fronted Terns/ Tara, and even an NZ Falcon/Kārearea. More falcon sightings were reported from Napier in May and July, and Havelock North in June. Two Spotted Shags/Kawau Tikitiki were seen at the outfall pipe on Muddy Creek in Clive and a Cape Petrel/Karetai Hurukoko was seen offshore. The number of Spotted Doves might be starting to increase in Hawke's Bay, with 2 pairs and a single seen in Havelock North in July. On 19/7, Ron Jackson reported 4 Fluttering Shearwaters washed up at Haumoana, with a further 6 found over the following 4 days at Haumoana and 35 at Ocean Beach, Lloyd Esler says these birds were part of a wider Fluttering Shearwater wreck, possibly related to sea temperatures or a glitch in the food chain.

- THALIA SACHTLEBEN

#### MANAWATU

It has been a quiet low-key winter in the Manawatū, but in August we held an online meeting to hear Massey University student Donavin de Jager talk about volunteering with the Kākāpō on Whenua Hou last summer. Donavin is a keen atlaser and made sure he took every opportunity he could to contribute to the Atlas while on the island. It was brilliant to see photos of birds on the island including introduced Snares Island Snipe. Bird-wise, the region has not had any especially unusual records, but noteworthy birds include Little Egret and White Heron at the Manawatū Estuary, Spotless Crake at Lake Omanu (near Foxton Beach township), and south of Hokio Beach, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos in the Pohangina Valley, and regular records of a flock of Rooks near Feilding. The most intriguing record came from a resident of Foxton township about what she was sure was a large, somewhat pale-headed corvid that was not a Rook, nor a Magpie. It was seen on her garden fence, and she grew up in the UK so she knows corvids. Could it have been a House Crow off a ship? - PHIL BATTLEY

#### WAIRARAPA

Our 2022 first field trip was to Putangirua and various spots on the road to Cape Palliser to fill under-reported Atlas squares. The track to the Pinnacles had a good variety of birds with Bellbirds, NZ Fantails and Grey Warblers to the fore. Our lunch-stop further round the coast featured a big flock of Chaffinches (50+) and a close encounter with several NZ Pipits. Some of the small lagoons had Black-fronted Dotterels, Black and Pied shags, and Whitefronted and Caspian terns. In April, we drove out to Pahaoa River mouth with multiple stops on the roadside rewarded with several encounters with Whitehead and plentiful Bellbird and Tui. One short stop yielded 15 species. On the coast at Kairingaringa Reef we found a family of dotterels. After some debate about whether they were Banded or NZ, wiser heads assured us they were Banded. It was great to have Jenny with us, who is an experienced and skillful bird photographer.

Highlights of our field trip to the Wairio walkway on the flanks of Wairarapa Moana/ Lake Wairarapa were multiple encounters with Australasian Bitterns. Spotless Crake were heard on several occasions but none were sighted. Another unusual encounter was with a large flock of Redpolls. Our July field trip was another foray into the farm and forest lands east of Masterton where we nailed 10 checklists in 5 Atlas squares. The ubiquitous harriers, magpies, and Spurwinged Plovers were seen at most stops, so it was gratifying to find 1 NZ Dabchick in a newly planted wetland on Westmere Road, the work of the Wainuioru Restoration Group.

In late June, we participated in the winter wader survey of Wairarapa Moana. On the return journey we noticed 3 separate farm paddocks smothered with Black-billed Gulls. We estimated 3,000 birds. As only a few hundred are regularly seen in the Wairarapa this must have been a South Island exodus (from Marlborough and Canterbury perhaps). – OLIVER DRUCE

#### WELLINGTON

Wellington activities continue over winter with another round of 5 minute bird counts on Kapiti Island and the monthly Pauatahanui survey. Unfortunately, our Cook Strait pelagic trip scheduled in late June was cancelled, so another is planned for later in the year. The well-travelled Banded Dotterel (PAP leg flag) from Eastbourne beach has spent its third winter in New Caledonia. PAP's wintering area near Noumea is destined to be turned into a marina and will not be available for waders next year. In mid-July David Ugolini from Société Calédonienne d'Ornithologie reported that PAP and the other Banded Dotterels had left their wintering area in New Caledonia. Banded Dotterels have started returning to the Eastbourne beach and hopefully will soon be joined by PAP.

One of the challenges of the NZ Bird Atlas scheme is to accurately determine the number of birds in large flocks. A notable example of this challenge has been estimating the number of Starlings as they come in to roost on Mana Island. On 27/5 at 4.25pm Dallas Bishop and I managed to photograph a flock of returning Starlings on Mana Island (https://ebird.org/ atlasnz/checklist/S112172756). A total of 2,092 birds were counted from prints of the photographs. In July on a single afternoon, we were treated to a classic murmuration of Starlings as they returned to Mana Island. They put on a magnificent display of precision flying as a single flock. This behaviour may be a defensive measure against predation by raptors. NZ Falcons have recently been recorded on Mana Island and the scavenged remains of Pukeko are a likely sign of their successful hunting.

- GEOFF DE LISLE



#### NELSON

Spring is just around the corner after our wettest July on record. We are making progress in our search for venues for the 2024 annual conference in Nelson. Our current preference is for the Trailways Hotel for the pre-meetings and we are going to book the Trafalgar Centre, courtesy of Nelson Council, for the scientific papers and AGM. Both are in the heart of Nelson, close to each other. A lot of Nelson members have already put their hands up to help and we will all meet on 13/8 for a hui at David and Vicky Melville's.

Our 4/7 meeting brought 16 followers to Richmond Library for presentations on monitoring forest birds in Kahurangi (Robin and Sandy Toy), shorebirds of Farewell Spit, Golden Bay and Tasman Bay (Rob Schuckard), and Paul Fisher's show-and-tell with his 2022 annual conference poster on Fernbirds. A big welcome to new member Sharen Graham. Our 1/8 meeting saw 21 members attend for the presentation by George Daly from Tasman District Council and his efforts to further the regeneration of the Waimea Delta by creating more wetlands with native plantings to protect and provide habitat for native bird species such as bitterns.

The Fernbird programme has been on hold for the winter to avoid the duck hunters at Whakapuaka and to give the Fernbirds time to recover after a very busy nesting season. Paul Fisher, Michelle Bradshaw and David Melville have instead turned their attention to banding Australasian Harriers and Welcome Swallows. The annual winter wader survey took place over the whole of the top of the South. Rob Schuckard reports: "The winter census took place between 15 and 18 July with very favourable weather and tides. There was good coverage at most sites by volunteers. Golden Bay had about 3,500 shorebirds, Tasman Bay 4,000, and Farewell Spit 7,300. In total 14,755 shorebirds and 10 species were recorded. Of all shorebirds, 23% were migratory and 77% endemic."

- PAUL GRIFFITHS

#### MARLBOROUGH

Despite July being Marlborough's wettest month on record, I managed to get out to do some local Atlasing on a couple of dry weekend days to fill some effort gaps around the Waihopai Valley and along the Northbank. Recently I walked from the Awatere River mouth past White Bluffs to the south-eastern side of the Wairau Lagoons. I saw thousands of Black Swans and Canada Geese plus good numbers of other native waterfowl, and spotted Brown Creeper, NZ Tomtit, and Rifleman among the regenerating bush nearby, and a few Cirl Buntings at the lagoons. I also saw 6 Great-crested Grebes and 2 Hoary-headed Grebes among the waterfowl on Lake Elterwater. Finally, Antarctic Fulmar have been fairly regularly seen throughout winter on the Albatross Encounter pelagic trips off Kaikoura.

#### CANTERBURY

A highlight for the Canterbury branch was hosting the New Zealand Bird Conference and Birds New Zealand AGM, held at Canterbury University over Queen's Birthday weekend. It was great to finally be able to hold the conference here after it had to be cancelled 2 years ago. A wide range of interesting

scientific presentations were made over the weekend, which covered a variety of species and included genetics and genomics, conservation, physiology, and much more. On the Monday, field trips included a behind-thescenes look at the Canterbury Museum, a trip to the Ashley Estuary and surrounding area, dedicated Atlasing, and visits to other local birding sites around the city.

One particularly exciting recent local sighting has been of a drake Chestnut Teal at Travis Wetlands in early June. The teal continued to be seen there regularly throughout the month, seeming to largely use 2 main areas of the wetlands. A Sharp-tailed Sandpiper was also seen at Travis Wetlands a few days before the Chestnut Teal was spotted. At Styx Mill Reserve, at least 1, and possibly 2, Marsh Crakes have been seen several times in the past few months. They are present at the same spot where several were seen regularly at a similar time last year. An Australasian Bittern was also seen at Styx Mill in early July.

Elsewhere, 3 Cattle Egrets have been reported on Kaiapoi Pa Road near Waikuku, north of Christchurch, alongside a White Heron, providing a nice comparison between the species. Little Owls continue to be regularly spotted there. Further south, a Little Tern was seen at Kaitorete Spit, Lake Ellesmere, in early June. However, it was not picked up during the winter wader survey of the lake approximately a week later.

- ELEANOR GUNBY

#### OTAGO

Despite the cold, 25 members ventured out for the Global Big Day (13/5). The Otago region had the highest species record (79), and by far the biggest contributor of checklists (196). Monthly Atlas trips are underway. We visited 4 squares around Lawrence on 3/7. Otago's Atlas autumn coverage closed with 268 of Otago squares having some coverage, 117 species recorded, and 5,130 seasonal checklists from 141 people. Part way through the penultimate winter coverage is lower with only 238 squares visited.

In late autumn, a Kereru with chicks was observed in Dunedin. During winter, records of interest included a Hudsonian Godwit at Aramoana, 17 Black-billed Gulls at Makaroara on 20/6, and 31 Pied Shags at Waikouaiti River mouth (largest Otago record as far as we know). Kotuku were recorded at 6 sites around greater Dunedin, Sulphur-crested Cockatoos in the Catlins, and 2 Red-crowned Kakariki in Waipori Gorge. Large flocks of songbirds included 85 Skylark on the Maniototo and 325 in Hakataramea Valley, 109 Blackbirds on a Dunedin sports field, 400 Goldfinch at Goodwood, and 250 Yellowhammers at Lake Haves

The winter wader count took place when a 2.2m high tide combined with a low pressure system and strong winds, resulting in many roost sites being submerged. Some - PATRICK CROWE usual hotspots for Bar-tailed Godwits were empty and 109 counted in the Catlins is the highest winter count so far there. OpenVue community project invited us to help 20 people ID birds in North East Valley prior to the NZ Garden Bird Survey. The survey itself had great results from Dunedin, however we lost our 'most participants per population' crown to Nelson. The Wanaka Backyard Trapping group invited us to give a talk

which was well-attended. This interest from community groups to learn more about birds is encouraging.

Our AGM was held on 16/7 and monthly meetings continue to be optional in-person or online, which enables good attendance. The 6th season of SI Robin nest success monitoring outside of Orokonui Sanctuary starts on 20/8. Oscar Thomas has installed 25 Rifleman nest boxes at Ross Creek where local members are invited to help with monitoring. Upcoming events include pelagic trips from Moeraki on 10 & 11/9 (contact Oscar Thomas: oscarkokako@gmail.com); a birdwatching walk in Dunedin Botanic Gardens (11/9); a combined Birds New Zealand/Otago Regional Council wetland bird monitoring weekend at Te Nohoaka o Tukinaunau Sinclair Wetlands on 17 & 18/9: and Town Belt 5-minute bird counts with the University of Otago ecological group AAPES on 25/9.

- FRANCESCA CUNNINGHAME

#### SOUTHLAND

Our winter wader count was held on the Matariki holiday weekend. It was pleasing to see some members taking part in their first count and it seems they all enjoyed it. so hopefully they will be back for future counts. Birds of interest recorded were Black Stilt, Wrybill, and Terek Sandpiper, and Sean Jacques spotted an immature Whiskered Tern while en route to the count at the New River estuary shellbanks. Sean has a knack for spotting rarer species around Southland and thanks to his skills many birders had good views of this bird as it settled in at the Clifton Wastewater ponds for a few weeks. A pair of Cape Barren Geese turned up near Fortrose Estuary on 19/6 for some weeks, the first Southland sighting for many years. It has been suggested they may have been escapees from local breeders.

On 14/05 Pete McClelland and Sean Jacques saw 4 Little Terns among a mixed species flock at the New River shellbanks. This is the highest count recorded for Southland and follows a run of recent sightings of birds at several locations in the region. Breeding populations of Little Terns occur on both sides of the Equator, with the nearest in Australia. Expert advice based on plumage and timing suggests these were likely to be immature boreal birds massing before their first return migration to the northern hemisphere. The presence of relatively high numbers in extralimital areas is likely linked to a good breeding season in the previous northern summer.

Birds New Zealand members are regularly involved with banding and annual flock counts of Southern New Zealand Dotterel (SNZD) in Awarua Bay. This year there are only 144 birds remaining which is a sharp decline over the last few years. If nothing more is done the SNZD could soon be functionally extinct. Finally, the Southland branch received a significant bequest from Mrs Dorothy Alloo, a former Southlander with a passion for birds. The bequest was to promote birds, birdwatching and birdrelated research in Southland and the group has decided that one of the best ways to do this was to set up a scholarship with the Southern Institute of Technology for any degree students doing bird-related research. The scholarship is also available to students from Southland doing bird-related research - PHIL RHODES elsewhere.

## **Book Reviews**

Feats Beyond Amazing Paul Gibson Unique Pictorials RRP: \$34.95



There aren't many books about an individual wild bird. This is one mainly about a male Bar-

tailed Godwit with a leg flag marked with the letters AJD, which has migrated each year from Arctic Alaska to the Manawatu and Whanganui estuaries in New Zealand since at least 2005. When it had the leg flag fitted in 2005 it was thought to be at least three years-old, making it now at least 16 years-old. Each year it migrates north back to its breeding grounds in Alaska, often setting out from the same spot, on the same date, at the same time.

This A4 portrait format soft cover book by photographer and author Paul Gibson is illustrated with more than 80 of his excellent colour photographs. Most are of AJD with the rest being other godwits and migratory wading birds, and the Whanganui Estuary. There are also four informative graphics and a map that help describe the migration and life-cycle of Bar-tailed Godwits, and the main sites to see them in New Zealand.

Over its 64 pages, it tells the fascinating story of AJD, godwit migration, their lives in New Zealand, and the importance of bird banding and 'flyway' site protection. A wide variety of photos illustrating different plumages and behaviours accompany the accessible, well-structured text. I did, however, wonder if it might have worked even better in a landscape format as so many of the photos were shot in that format.

This is an excellent book for those interested in godwit migration and migrant wading birds, which is also suitable for teaching students about these brilliant birds and their amazing feats of migration. It can be ordered online here: info@upics.co.nz.

The Compact Australian Bird Guide Jeff Davies *et al* CSIRO Publishing RRP AU\$34.99



This compact version of the award-winning Australian Bird Guide (ABG) covers all the birds of mainland Australia, Tasmania and nearshore

islands, and seabirds that regularly occur within a one-day boat trip from land. At 20 x 12 x 1.5cm, its 264 pages have fewer illustrations and shorter texts but provide enough for making fast and accurate identifications.

Among the seabirds, all the albatross species that regularly occur in NZ waters are here except Chatham and White-capped, all the prions except Broad-billed and Fulmar, all the terns except Black-fronted and Antarctic, all the storm petrels except NZ and White-bellied, all the petrels except Westland, Black, and Pycroft's, and all the shearwaters except Subantarctic Little. All the tropicbirds, boobies, frigatebirds, and shags that regularly occur in Australia are here too.

There is a large selection of Arctic breeding waders (35 species), all the Australian native and endemic wader species, and a long list of the ducks, grebes, herons, and rails. Due to taxonomic changes adopted in 2021 (IOC version 11.1), it includes species accounts for Purple-backed Fairy Wren, Short-tailed Grass Wren, Opalton Grass Wren, Torresian Kingfisher, Cryptic Honeyeater, and Blackeared Catbird, and treats Common Gull-billed Tern and Australian Gull-billed Tern as two separate species. The original ABG is undoubtedly superior, but if you want a lighter-weight, pocketsized version that is easier to use in the field in Australia – that's also useful for identifying seabirds and migrant waders and ducks in NZ – then this fits the bill.

MICHAEL SZABO, EDITOR

Native Birds of Aotearoa Michael Szabo Te Papa Press RRP \$27

At first glance a question arises. What is the purpose of this book among a plethora of other published titles about New Zealand birds?

It is, according to the front piece, "inspired by *Native Birds* (1948) and *More Birds* (1951) from the popular Nature in New Zealand series published by AH & AW Reed....



The beauty and appeal of these books lies in their simplicity."

The new book takes a similar approach and even uses some of the original illustrations. A compact and slender hardback, with a pleasing cover design, it certainly retains that beauty and appeal. In a further departure from other publications, it uses the *New Zealand Birds Online* website as its main source of information. A brilliantly comprehensive site that is regularly updated, this is an invaluable resource for everyone. Also useful is a brief but illuminating introduction to this book by Te Papa Curator of Vertebrates, Alan Tennyson.

Limited to 60 species, it by no means provides comprehensive coverage. These, however, represent all groups found in Aotearoa New Zealand – forest, garden, wetland, coastal, alpine, and marine birds – reflecting the range of subtropical, temperate, and subantarctic habitats found on our archipelago. There is a brief description of each bird and its calls, its habitat, and an ornithologist's note which includes range, annual cycle, breeding behaviour and diet.

Unfortunately, one significant error occurs in the section on bartailed godwit. "Kuaka make the longest non-stop migration flight (8-9 days, from Aotearoa to western Alaska) of any non-seabird, but unlike seabirds they do not stop to feed." The non-stop flight is from Alaska, and during northward migration birds stage and refuel in East Asia.

Opposite each entry is a black and white image. Where an original illustration was not available or was not considered to be as accurate as required, new images in a similar style were produced by Pippa Keel. Inevitably this has led to variations in overall quality, though most are good.

A further benefit of the book is that it reflects recent changes, both ornithological and cultural. Species are arranged according to the taxonomic order of the most recent New Zealand checklist published online this year. Thus, for example, seabirds follow shorebirds rather than vice versa as in previous publications.

The most recent conservation threat ranking for each species is also here. Given many recent changes, with some populations increasing while others have declined further, this is helpful. In addition to the names of birds, it also uses Te Reo place names alongside English.

Anyone with even a passing interest in birds may find this book useful. Among people of all ages, it may spark an interest, serving as a useful introduction. It will also make an excellent gift.

KEITH WOODLEY, COUNCILLOR

As per the advertisement on page 2 of this magazine, a discount of 30% on pre-orders received by 19th October 2022 is available to Birds New Zealand members using the code NATURE30 via the Te Papa Store website: <u>https://tepapastore.co.nz/collections/</u> <u>te-papa-press</u>

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