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Otago Region Newsletter 8/2022 *September 2022*

Face masks are now an individual choice.
However, if you feel unwell, please stay home out of
consideration for others.



Ornithological Snippets

A **Mute Swan** was present on Lake Tuakitoto on 27 August, and a **Chestnut Teal** (or possibly a hybrid with **Grey Teal**) was at Sinclair Wetlands on 17 September. A **Pheasant** was reported from Wanaka at the beginning of September. A **Great Crested Grebe** was seen at Katiki Reservoir on 21 and 28 August.

A **Black Stilt** seen at Tarras from late August was released as a juvenile in January 2015, and hasn't been seen since. The presence of numerous hybrids at the Tarras location suggests it has spent some time here in the intervening period. A pair of **SIPO** at Leith Mouth on 16 September had 2 chicks. **Bar-tailed Godwits** seem to have returned early this year; at least 4 were at Hawkesbury Lagoon on 20 August, with 79 there on 1 September. Obvious new arrivals were at Blueskin Bay from 9 September

An immature **Buller's Mollymawk** was taken into care after being found at the Balclutha landfill in early September. Finally, the first **Shining Cuckoo** of the season was heard and seen at Signal Hill on 18 September.

Please send any interesting reports to cluthaphotos@gmail.com **Richard Schofield**

eBird News

We are now well into the penultimate spring of the Atlas. Coverage in easily accessible areas is generally good, though closer examination of the Atlas Effort Map shows there are still some thinly-covered squares; in particular, the Taieri Plains could use further coverage, (don't forget to seek out different habitats within a square - check out Taieri Golf Club for waterbirds, for example), while DY34 (Sandymount) has only had a single spring visit.

The spring Global Big Day is on Saturday 8 October. We are not making this an official event for the region this year, but why not use it as an excuse to spend all or part of the day birding somewhere different. Any sightings benefit the Atlas.

Contact Richard 027 281 8701 or cluthaphotos@gmail.com

BirdsNZ Otago Branch News

Guided Birdwatching Walks in Botanic Gardens Report

We had a great morning guiding about 25 members of the public around the gardens looking for birds. Huge thanks to our members that turned up to help – we all had a very enjoyable time.

The folk who came along were very appreciative and often commented that they were so surprised there were so many different species; “I thought they were all sparrows”. The groups that went to the upper gardens were treated to many bellbird, tui and kereru in the kowhai, and even found a bellbird nest. The dunnocks as always were a fascination as most people had not noticed them being different from sparrows before.



Thanks to Suzanne for expert organisation of the event (a lot of work goes on behind the scene getting Health and Safety Plans approved by DCC, advertising, etc) and for the delicious shortbread treat at the end.

Mary Thompson

Photos by Claire Hagglund



Cryptic Wetland Birds Workshop a booming success (although no bittern were heard during the field surveys).

A first for Otago, a wetland bird monitoring workshop took place over the weekend from the 17 – 18 September. This workshop was organised by Scott Jarvie, Terrestrial Ecologist from Otago Regional Council (and Birds NZ member) where he identified the opportunity for Birds NZ members to assist with better understanding the distribution and status of cryptic wetland birds within Otago.



Introductory hui session on Saturday

Bruce McKinlay

Mary Thompson and Bruce McKinlay helped organise the event and Harry Caley, Wetland Birds Science Advisor with the Department of Conservation took part providing us with technical advice and expertise. There were twenty participants taking part and the event was held at Te Nohoaka o Tukiauau/Sinclair Wetlands which was an excellent venue for a wetland bird focussed weekend, with pūkeko interactions, cruising hungry kahu/Australasian harriers, and a pair of SIPO feeding young chicks all visible on the grass and wetland edge just outside the windows.

The aim over the weekend was to build skills for Birds NZ members to effectively monitor wetland birds, specifically matuku hūrepo/Australasian bittern, kotoreke/marsh crake, and pūweto/spotless crake, and to identify opportunities for collaboration to help us jointly increase our understanding of these threatened cryptic species within Otago. With only 10% of New Zealand's original wetlands remaining, many of which are in poor condition due to surrounding land use practices coupled with logistical challenges for effective introduced predator control, increased understanding of these poorly understood species is a conservation priority. Additionally, as we approach the last two years of the NZ Bird Atlas, we are keen to start recording the more challenging species that are found in our region and being able to better monitor for these cryptic wetland birds will hopefully increase Otago Bird NZ member's Atlas records.

The first day was spent inside with Harry giving us a thorough introduction to DOC's cryptic wetland bird monitoring methods, both in-person (including playback for crakes) and acoustic monitor surveys. Scott spoke of how increased monitoring throughout Otago wetlands can contribute to ORC objectives in addition to the support available through equipment loans. Birds NZ member and Zoology PhD student Zohara Rafi, whose research is focused on acoustic recorders including with the Australasian bittern, gave us an introduction to some of the different acoustic recorders available and Harry then took us through the analysis software where we could see the bittern boom sonograms. The most notable bird record made this day was Oscar Thomas' of a possible chestnut teal in the nearby pond.



Night time: setting out recorders and listening for bitterns on Saturday night
Bruce McKinlay

After a beautiful sunny day inside we had an enjoyable meal, thanks Bruce, before getting ready for our evening monitoring exercise. It was perfectly calm, and conditions could not have been better for a listening survey. We walked out across the wetland causeways to Ram Island in the fading light with the pinging calls from the numerous mātata/SI fernbird dropping off as darkness arrived. Once on the island we divided into two groups and listened for bittern booms. This was at a site where in 2011 Birds NZ monitoring

had detected bitterns booming. No bitterns were heard by either group, but we enjoyed the wetland after dark sounds and amongst the chorus of bell frogs we got some decent night checklists with scaup, Australasian shoveler, black swan, and Canada goose being recorded.

Sixteen participants stayed overnight at the wetlands, with seven staying in the hut on Ram Island. We continued with marsh crake playback and while none responded to the calls, one bird was heard around 9:45pm by the group staying on Ram Island.

It was a frosty morning and the overnight hut stayers had a pleasant walk back to base where a warm fire and breakfast greeted them. We then went out for a walk to collect three acoustic recorders that had been put out a few days earlier. At each site we discussed the location and thought about the key factors that had contributed to choosing these sites.

Again mātata/SI fernbird calls were frequent and on Ram Island a small grove of kōwhai in heavy flower was alive with tūi and korimako/bellbird song. Other forest birds, including pīpīpi/brown creeper, riroriro/grey warbler, pīwakakwaka/NZ fantail, and tauhou/silvereye added to the weekend bird counts, with the overall species count for the weekend reaching 40.

Walk to Ram Island to collect recorders on Sunday morning
Bruce McKinlay



Downloading sound recordings to a computer and analysing for bittern booms
Bruce McKinlay



Harry Caley from DOC explaining placement of recorders

Mary Thompson



Collecting recorder from the end of boardwalk

Mary Thompson



Participants gathered for workshop (missing Bruce who took the photo and Georgina who arrived after robin study day)

Bruce McKinlay

Back at base we downloaded the acoustic recorders and reviewed the sound files – no booming bitterns were recorded. Harry helped reassure us by mentioning that it might be a bit early in the season and optimal monitoring does not start in southern NZ until late September - so we need to get out there again over the next few weeks!

We finished the weekend by thinking how we can all contribute to the Otago wide monitoring and which wetlands to prioritise. I am excited to start the second season of our Forest & Bird project monitoring for bitterns in the wetlands around Tautuku, Catlins, knowing that our team are now better set up to do this more effectively, and that the data we gather can contribute to wider scale monitoring. I also look forward to being involved in field trips with keen Birds NZ members to monitor wetlands, and to the future workshops as this Otago wide project unfolds and progresses.

Thanks to Scott, Bruce, Mary, Harry, and Zohara for their organising and input to this successful and enjoyable weekend.

Francesca Cunningham

The godwits have returned already

On 9th Sept, Nick Beckwith reported 270 godwits at Blueskin Bay and 346 by 12th September. Adrienne Mulqueen counted 400+ godwits at Hoopers Inlet on 10th Sept (up from the 50-60 over-wintering there). This is an earlier return than usual.



Nick Beckwith



Nick Beckwith

Nick has seen 7 banded birds back already and most of them are regulars from previous years (but not seen all winter). BYYB is a female banded at Warrington in 2008 and BYRW is a male banded in 2006, so probably nearly 20 years old, and been making the journey back and forth to Alaska all these years. We are looking out for the arrival of juvenile birds, which can be distinguished by their brighter, almost jazzy, patterned wing plumage. These young ones make the trip from Alaska for the first time by themselves.

Mary Thompson

Dunedin Town Belt Survey Update for Spring: 2022

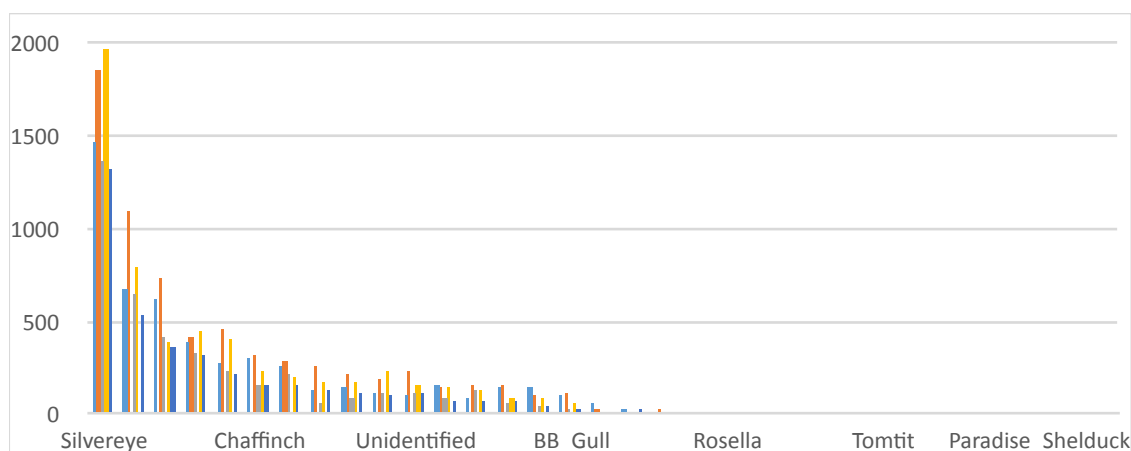
As we enter the sixth season of our project to count the birds along the town belt, I'm here to update you on work completed and give you a bit of a teaser for Tuesdays meeting.

Hopefully this season will work as seamlessly as last for you all.

I will be on expanding on this at next week's meeting (see elsewhere in this newsletter), but remember that our intensive October and November starts next week.

I'm just checking in to remind you all it going to happen and to start thinking about getting your walks organised.

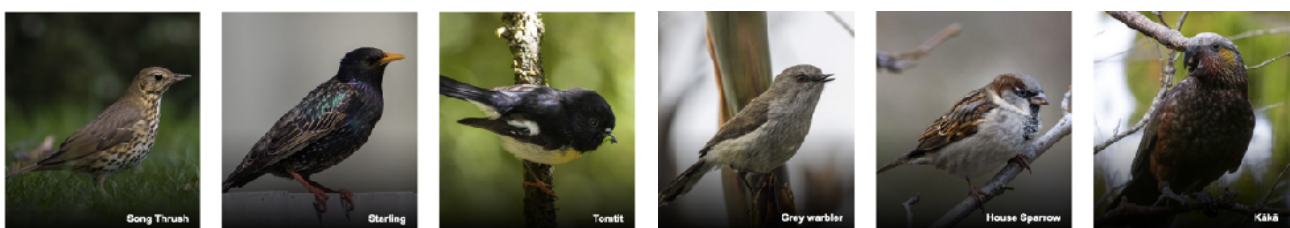
But first a bit of data from last year. This plot is the total number of counts completed each year. Thanks for keeping the data flowing even during COVID times.



The instructions have not changed from last year and I include the instruction form again. Please note: if you are going to send me paper copies then I've moved. I'm now at 11 Brugh Place Waverley.

Remember this is essentially a five minute bird study on fixed points. I've heard that some see it as a good day out with a bus ride at the end back to your car and others are cycling along enjoying the town belt and counting birds. Whatever, it's a great opportunity to get out among a good range of birds and to enjoy the town belt.

I'm happy to accept data in whatever form you want to give it to me but getting it electronically is best. So thanks to everybody who submitted electronic copies: this really made compiling the data sheet a lot faster. Here is an example of the headings I'm using in the core data sheet. If you use these then that makes my life much easier.



Date	Observer	Cloud Cover	Wind	Precipn	Location	Start Time	Comments	Cars	Species	Count
04-Oct-17	Francie/ Pat	overcast	calm	None	MaoriRoad	8:25	.	0	Blackbird	1
04-Oct-17	Francie/ Pat	overcast	calm	None	MaoriRoad	8:25	.	1	Dunnock	2
04-Oct-17	Francie/ Pat	overcast	calm	None	MaoriRoad	8:25	.	3	House_Sparrow	2
04-Oct-17	Francie/ Pat	overcast	calm	None	MaoriRoad	8:25	.	4	Silvereye	3
04-Oct-17	Francie/ Pat	overcast	calm	Nil	QueensDr_5	8:45	.	0	BB_Gull	1
04-Oct-17	Francie/ Pat	overcast	calm	Nil	QueensDr_5	8:45	.	10	Brown_Creeper	1
04-Oct-17	Francie/ Pat	overcast	calm	Nil	QueensDr_5	8:45	.	0	Dunnock	1
04-Oct-17	Francie/ Pat	overcast	calm	Nil	QueensDr_5	8:45	.	2	Grey_Warbler	1
04-Oct-17	Francie/ Pat	overcast	calm	Nil	QueensDr_5	8:45	.	3	House_Sparrow	2
04-Oct-17	Francie/ Pat	overcast	calm	Nil	QueensDr_5	8:45	.	4	Silvereye	5
04-Oct-17	Francie/ Pat	overcast	calm	Nil	QueensDr_5	8:45	.	5	Song_Thrush	2
04-Oct-17	Francie/ Pat	overcast	calm	Nil	QueensDr_4	9:00	Noise from cars	6	Bellbird	1

So what did we get last year and whats the overall pattern look like?

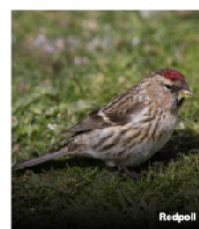
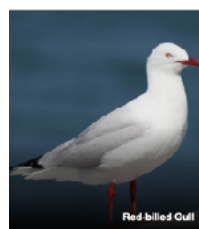
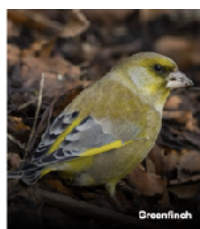
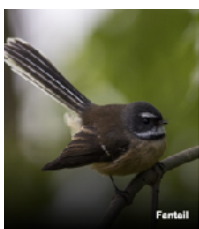
There will be a lot more details at the talk but here's a teaser.

We have recorded 31 species in total. The top five species based on total count remain silvereyes, blackbird, bellbird, redpoll and grey warbler, but inter-annual variation is starting to show up.

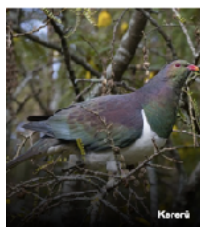
So the 2022 Town Belt survey starts on 1 October and runs until 30 November. It's to be done in the morning and we can't get enough counts. A great opportunity to get out with family and friends.

Cheers

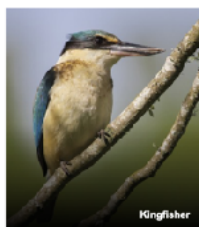
Bruce



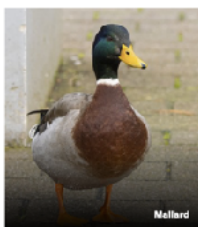
Birds NZ Dunedin Town Belt Bird Survey				Species	TALLY	TOTAL
Observer:				Bellbird		
Count station Number:				Black Backed Gull		
Date:				Blackbird		
Time	Start			Brown creeper		
				Cars		
	cloud cover		wind	Chaffinch		
circle one	clear skies		calm	Dunnock		
or bold type	partly cloudy		light breeze	Fantail		
	overcast		moderate wind	Goldfinch		
				Greenfinch		
	precipitation			Grey Warbler		
	nil			House Sparrow		
				Kereru (NZ Pigeon)		
	fog			Kingfisher		
	drizzle			Redpoll		
Noise (eg wind, cars, the sea, etc.) NOT Cars count them under species list				Rosella		
When to survey				Shining cuckoo		
Between 1 October- 1 December				Silvereye		
Do as many counts as you can fit in during this period.				Song thrush		
(However surveys at other times are also useful and welcome)				Starling		
				Tui		
Please do a 5 minute bird count				Welcome swallow		
a) Please record all species you observe (hear or see).						
b) Do not worry if you cannot identify one - count under "unidentified"						
c) Record birds seen or heard up to 100m away. Where this is				Unidentified		
inconvenient or silly decide on your boundaries but stay consistent.						
d) Count all birds seen or heard						
e) At the end please complete the total column for each species						
f) Please also complete a count of the cars that drove past you while counting						
In the morning before 12 pm, but after the dawn chorus - about 1 hour after sunrise.						
PLEASE, ONLY RECORD THE BIRDS THAT YOU ARE SURE OF						
(place all others under "unidentified" for a total count of birds observed)						
AND ABOVE ALL BE CONSISTENT						
Please send your records to Bruce McKinlay 11 Brugh Place, Dunedin or email to: brucejmckinlay@gmail.com						
				Thank you!		



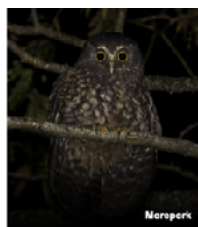
Kereru



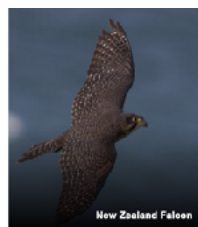
Kingfisher



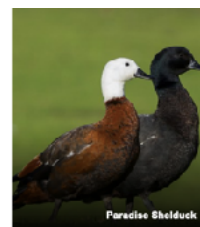
Mallard



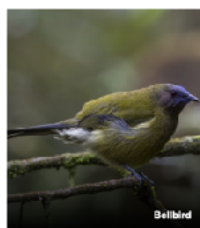
Morsperk



New Zealand Falcon



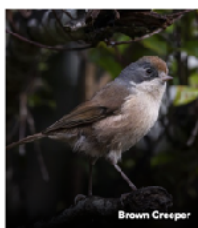
Paradise Shelduck



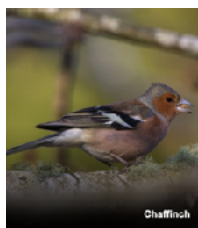
Bellbird



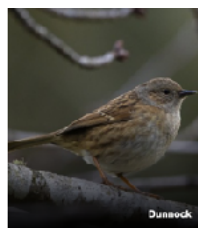
Blackbird



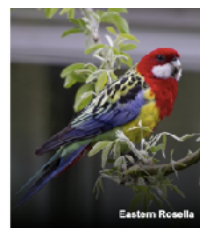
Brown Creeper



Chaffinch



Dunnock



Eastern Rosella

Bird images from

<https://birdcount.nz/birds-of-the-town-belt>

Notes from Graeme Loh

Sue and I have just returned from a series of trips to the West Coast to inspect DOC held Stewardship Land and make submissions on what better reserve status they might have. We presented our submission on the Arahura Marae Wednesday 14th September.

Then we had a few days 'off' bike riding through the forests and wetlands. Yes, birds were seen. The crowd pleasing highlight was a weka family, two chicks feeding in public at the Hokitika Gorge Carpark.



Turned over grass is a telltale sign of foraging weka

Spring! We were surprised to find pairs of SIPO on the riverbeds of the Waitaha and Mikonui, and also variable oystercatchers well inland. A pair of dotterels on the Waitaha. Quite surprising considering how thoroughly the floods bring more logs and rocks down the river at frequent intervals. They must occasionally get chicks away.

We saw weka in many places south of the Taramakau, down into the Waitaha. They were absent when I first explored Westland in the 70's. And the robins seem to have expanded their range, but still a patchy distribution focused on small areas of prime habitat.

At a quick look in the literature there was no mention of sexual dimorphism in weka but looking at this pair there is quite a difference in the plumage and size. Pity I did not take more pics! This is a still from a video.

The reclassification of Stewardship land is progressing around the country and will reach Otago sometime in the coming year. A major concern of many submitters was the recommendation to make many places 'Conservation Park' even though they had natural values that justified more secure protection from dogs, four wheel drives and mining.

So keep that in mind when you are exploring for the bird atlas. The stewardship land can be found on the DOC website. This link takes you straight there.

https://www.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?url=https://services1.arcgis.com/3JjYDyG3oajxU6H0/ArcGIS/rest/services/DOC_Public_Conservation_Land/FeatureServer/0&source=sd

As we were heading home Franny told us that the titi were back at Sandfly Bay on 18 Sept and we found plenty of sign in the prion fence today the 21 Sept. Give me a yell if you want to view the titi coming in one evening.

Cheers

Graeme

A Birds Eye View

Below are images of eyes from 15 different birds, all found in the South Island. Can you identify all of them without the use of Google or a bird book?



Answers will be given in the October newsletter. If you can't wait that long, please email petrina.duncan@southernlakessanctuary.org.nz for the answers. Some of you may find your own photographs in the line-up.

Petrina Duncan

Spring bird counts on Quarantine Island / Kamau Taurua

Here is an opportunity to go to Quarantine Island and help with the fortnightly 5-minute Spring bird counts. It usually takes about 2 hours to do all 9 bird count sites around the island. We do a 5-minute count at each site, starting around 9.30 -10am, depending upon boat transfers.

I will make a call the day before, as the counts are weather dependent, and we won't go if it's raining or very windy. I will make an alternative date if the weather isn't favourable. Boat transfers (\$15pp return, or there may be a possible subsidy) leave from Back Beach in Port Chalmers with a possible Portobello pontoon pick up by arrangement.

Possible dates (weather & boat transfer dependent) for the first count are;

Saturday 8th October or Sunday 9th

Saturday 15th October or Sunday 16th

Monday 17th October or Tuesday 18th

If you think you or anyone you know might be interested in joining in, please let me know, and let me know your contact phone number/s.

Kā mihi nui, nā

Claire Hagglund

021-105-8442

clairehagglund@gmail.com

Musings on the old bird records in my box of notebooks



I'm of an age when I sit in my rocking chair on the porch, banjo and shotgun on my lap, enjoying the evening view (see photo), the burbling Blackbirds, the odd Grey Warbler and the sad Orokonui Kaka searching for a long gone, bountiful native forest. And, as Mary Gauthier sings of old men in her song "I drink" I think. Amongst other things, about the birds I have seen.

And drink if the truth be told.

On the third glass of cheap red, I panic. What's to become of all those old bird records in my box of notebooks? Spine-tailed Swift, Tree Martin, Aussie Little Grebe, Little Egret, Cattle Egrets galore. Cirl Buntings? Little Spotted Kiwi? I'll forgo the North Island Thrush on the road near Waikaremoana. Hocken Library? No point. No one will understand the abbreviations let alone the locations; third cutty graaa on the left after last year's slip and anyway there's a few love poems tossed in that I wouldn't want anyone to see.

Ebird!!!! That's the answer. Sanitised, scientific records. Future proofed. Secure as. Well maybe, though I have my doubts after iNaturalist went awol recently due to a simple power failure at some microsoft serverly thingie out West US of A. Haven't they got NZ number 8 wire back up generators for heavens sake.

I gave it a go a while back and uploaded some West Coast records from 40 odd years ago; records that had been accepted for PDCSN (Pre-Digital Classified Summarised Notes). Now I do reckon it's a good idea to have scrutinisers of the records submitted to eBird. In fact I did it

for a while for CSN, let alone the Rare Birds Committee and I wasn't exactly uncritical but to demand, as Nick Allen did, that every record of the likes of Little Egret should be referred to the RBC or whatever they are called these days, was, um, to be polite, time consuming especially so as they'd already been accepted and published in CSN. An email correspondence ensued which was never satisfactorily resolved. So I gave up. Noticed that recently there are a fair few ebird records attributed to OSNZ data. Some of which are mine, presumably from CSN? So maybe the dilemma has been resolved? I've no desire to claim the observations. It's good that they are there.

But I had another go the other day after knocking back a glass or two of home made redcurrant wine on the deck as the alien Little Owls squabbled in the Macrocarpas.

18 November 1977. A 2.6 km stroll along SH1 just south of Punakaiki ~~to my hippie girlfriend's place to smoke dope and play music etc.~~ Native logged over bush with nikau on one side, scruffy, wet West Coast paddocks on the other.

No "rare" birds were seen so Nick has so far nowt to say but eBird did.....

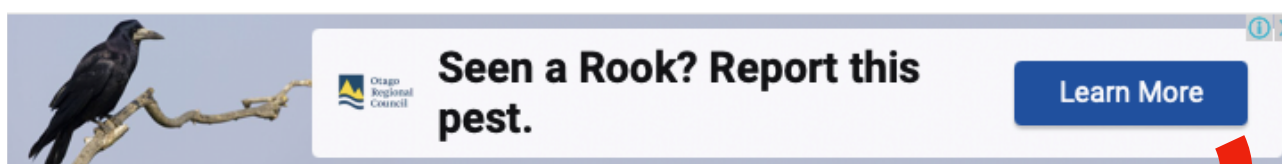
What's the phrase? **This is a high count for this date & location: please add comments, check 'Complete', and add any photos or sounds after submitting and saving the checklist.**

It questioned 16 Grey Warbler, 31 Song Thrush, 27 Blackbirds, 11 Dunnocks, 17 Lesser Redpolls, 7 Yellowhammers and believe it or not 26 Silvereyes. Yes I know bar one and a half they're all aliens but digital birding seems to be stuck in the present. I ticked the Complete box and wrote shifting baselines.

We are like those Orokonui Kaka flying around in our sheep and lifestyle habitats. Unable to recall the forests of 500, maybe even 150 years ago, they gleefully home in on the few remaining flowering kowhai while we celebrate the Orokonui and Zealandia sanctuaries in a land that was once forested, not realising what we have lost.

So next time you write a submission or, heaven forbid, protest about, for example, the proposed re-classification of stewardship land on the West Coast, think Kaka, think aged hippie on his deck, think that the baseline has not shifted. The baseline is not now but a forested Aotearoa. Any more nibbling away at what little we have left is a crime.

Derek Onley



<https://www.orc.govt.nz/managing-our-environment/pest-hub/animals/rooks>

If you see rooks in Otago contact ORC 0800 474 082 or by emailing pests@orc.govt.nz; in Southland: 0800 76 88 45 or email service@es.govt.nz

Programme 2022

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

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

The Meeting zoom link

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88345925381>

Sunday 25 Sept Birds NZ is holding a guided 5MBC along the Town Belt Bird Count Trail with student members of AAPES 10 - 12 noon, followed by pizza lunch. Contact Bruce if you can come to help brucejmckinlay@gmail.com

Tuesday 27 Sept Bruce McKinlay
Town Belt Bird Survey findings

21 - 24 Oct Adventure Atlassing Labour weekend - Naseby area. Contact Richard cluthaphotos@gmail.com

Tuesday 25 Oct Oscar Thomas, Catherine Bradley and Zac Martin
The kakapo recovery programme ~ highlights of our experiences.

Tuesday 22 Nov Bird Quiz Night ???

If we would like to have another quiz for the last meeting of the year we **need someone to volunteer as Quiz master** to coordinate the event, devise questions (ask others to contribute questions or ideas) and collate the quiz content. If this sounds like you, please let Mary know.

Suggestions of locations for field trips and atlassing trips, and offers to help lead trips would really be appreciated, please contact Mary birds.otago@birds.nz.org.nz

Please send all contributions for the October newsletter to: Sue Odlin sodlin@gmail.com

Final date for copy for next newsletter: **18 October**