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## *Otago Region Newsletter 10/2022*

*November 2022*

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



### Ornithological Snippets

All dates refer to November unless otherwise stated.

At least 2 **Spotless Crakes** were located at Fleming Wetland between 11 and 15 as part of the ORC sponsored wetland monitoring project. A single **Wrybill** remained at Cabbage Point until at least 7, while a **Hudsonian Godwit** was at Warrington from 3 to 10, and 4 **Red Knot** were there on 3 & 4.

An unseasonal **Fiordland Crested-Penguin** was Roaring Bay (Nugget Point) on 7. **White Herons** were seen near Shag Point on 16 and at Glenorchy on 12, and a **Little Egret** was reported near Aramoana on 4.

3 **Red-crowned Parakeet** were seen Papatowai on 11 November. A leucistic Blackbird has been seen several times on a grassy patch at the side of the road at the junction of City Road and Queens Drive by Janet Ledingham and Francie Beggs. They have seen this bird before - Francie reckons it is a female, while Janet has photos from 2018 and reckons it is the same bird.

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

## eBird News

At this stage of the Atlas, most of the easily accessible squares have good coverage, and the ones that need fieldwork are either distant or not so accessible, or both. In any case we need to make sure that our visits are as efficient as possible, so that we don't have to make another trip (in the relevant season) when the time could be more usefully employed elsewhere. So, I'm going to make a few suggestions for finding as many birds as possible when in an unfamiliar area.

Assuming you've already checked the Atlas Effort Map to find suitable locations, next look at either a topomap (paper or digital), or satellite imagery, or preferably both ([www.topomap.co.nz](http://www.topomap.co.nz) has the ability to toggle between the two forms, likewise the [outdoor access map](#), on which you can also overlay the Atlas grid). Look for different habitats – waterways are a good start, but bear in mind that in some areas irrigation ponds in particular are appearing all the time, and may not show on the map. Look for bush and forestry, which can be distinguished from each other on either form of map.

Try to cover all habitats in a square, even if you think you've found all likely species. And if you're in a square that has (or seems to have) very few species, do multiple counts, ideally a mixture of stationary and travelling counts, as this will maximise your chances of finding as many species as possible.

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

## BirdsNZ Otago Branch News

### Enjoy Meeting Talks again on YouTube

The talks at Birds NZ meetings were recorded and have been uploaded to YouTube with the following links.

<a href="https://youtu.be/DgYt3t4KcHs">https://youtu.be/DgYt3t4KcHs</a>	Adrian Reagans talk on juvenile godwits
<a href="https://youtu.be/cnvYKSmOUYY">https://youtu.be/cnvYKSmOUYY</a>	Photographing birds by Craig McKenzie
<a href="https://youtu.be/hq9dz87NNsE">https://youtu.be/hq9dz87NNsE</a>	Seabird Identification by Oscar Thomas
<a href="https://youtu.be/IYkGK4rSZv0">https://youtu.be/IYkGK4rSZv0</a>	Torea on the Move by Anne Schlesselmann
<a href="https://youtu.be/lUbkhAc0FmE">https://youtu.be/lUbkhAc0FmE</a>	Seabird Conservation research Ursula Ellenberg
<a href="https://youtu.be/22QhGp4ukNo">https://youtu.be/22QhGp4ukNo</a>	Ancient NZ Birds by Nic Rawlence
<a href="https://youtu.be/-KvbdESNjJo">https://youtu.be/-KvbdESNjJo</a>	Chatham Island Wildlife by Ela Hunt

## Guided Chatham Island Trip

Hi folks, I have my 12th trip to Chatham Island 17-23 January. Maximum group size 12. We look at the plants, birds, bush, beaches, history and geography with the possibility of a trip to Pitt Island but not pelagic. A good way to see the island. Flights, accommodation and vehicle hire sorted. Let me know asap if you are interested.

Lloyd Esler [Esler@southnet.co.nz](mailto:Esler@southnet.co.nz)

## Tara photography competition

Help us find out what White-fronted terns are eating all around Aotearoa! We're kicking off a photographic citizen science research project into tara diet with a competition, so submit your images and be in to win!

DETAILS HERE

[nzseabirds.com/tara/](https://nzseabirds.com/tara/)



photo & video  
INTERNATIONAL



## Otago Summer Wader Count - November 6, 2022

	Karitane	Blueskin Bay	Aramoana	Harbour west	Harbour east	Papanui Inlet	Hoopers Inlet	Catlins	Portobello Pilots	<b>Total Nov 2022</b>	Total Dec 2021	Total Nov 2020
South Island Pied Oystercatcher	4	142	38	152	2	102	4	97	3	<b>544</b>	657	839
Variable Oystercatcher	13	10	4	10	1	12	4	2	20	<b>76</b>	54	85
Pied Stilt	39	6	12			15	3	21	2	<b>98</b>	26	15
Banded Dotterel								4		<b>4</b>	17	3
Spur-winged Plover	2	17	10		2		2			<b>24</b>	16	11
Bar-tailed Godwit	167	1030					680	420		<b>2297</b>	1904	1982

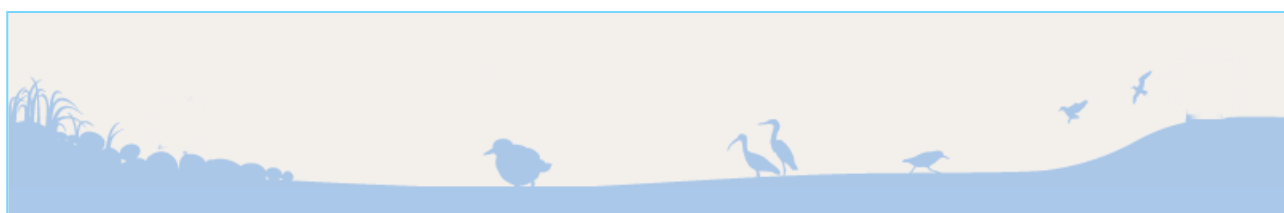
Thanks to all who participated in November's count.

No tagged SIPOs were reported

But there were some interesting sightings including:

- A white heron seen by Derek at Karitane
- 4 banded godwits at Warrington
- A Hudsonian godwit at Warrington
- 2 pairs of banded dotterels with nests in the Catlins
- A single wrybill in the Catlins
- A red knot reported from the Catlins and 2 seen by George at Warrington who was sure there were more but were impossible to count as they were mixed in with 950 godwits!
- A colony of black-backed gulls at Hoopers
- Approx.800 red-billed gulls at the Marina, many nesting on boat decks...woe to the boat owners!
- 54 spoonbills overall, 17 at Karitane

**Maree Johnstone**



## **Tautuku Matuku hūrepo/Australasian bittern monitoring weekend 11-13 November**

Scott Jarvie, Zohara Rafi, Fayas Mohamed, Craig McKenzie, Manaia Pearmain-Fenton, Martine Darrou, Petra Simpson, Gavin White, Francesca Cunninghame, Niko Jimenez-Cunninghame

We all had a very successful weekend based out of the Forest & Bird (F&B) Lenz Reserve cabins. We conducted evening bittern listening across three local wetlands: Tautuku, Fleming, and Tahakopa. The conditions were perfect on both nights (calm and mild!) for our hour-long listening surveys which we started at sunset, a spectacular sky on Friday evening was an added bonus.



Sunset across the Tautuku Estuary from the bittern listening site on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> November.

Photo: Petra Simpson

The Tautuku and Tahakopa listening sites were quick to access with dry feet, while it took an hour's walk through the forest along one of F&B's Tautuku Restoration Project's trap lines and a taped route, plus likely wet feet, to get to the upper Fleming wetland. It was a pleasure to listen to the evening bird calls at this more isolated wetland, still surrounded by native forest. The mātata/SI fernbird increased their calling as dusk fell and as they quietened down ruru/morepork called around us. On the second night we saw them silhouetted as they flew up and dropped steeply down hawking over the wetland. Entering the bird counts into eBird I got alerts for a high count of both these species (nine and seven respectively, both of which were absolute minimum estimates). The Tautuku group enjoyed the kotuku-ngutupapa/royal



spoonbill while the Tahakopa group identified a matuku moana/white faced heron nest in a tall macrocarpa tree.

The highlights from the wetland bird monitoring were Martine and Gavin hearing a three note matuku hūrepo/Australasian bittern boom sequence from the Tahakopa MacLennan count site on the Saturday evening. At last, a booming bird in the area where we have now had four confirmed sightings since 2019! We have since moved an acoustic recorder to the wetland close to where the bittern was heard, this is also contributing to Zohara's acoustic recorder research, and Zohara was able to provide long lasting batteries enabling 24 hour recordings.



The Tahakopa MacLennan count site where a bittern boom sequence was heard on the evening of Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> November. The bird was calling from the other direction from a *Carex secta* and harakeke dominated wetland. Photo: Francesca Cunninghame

The upper Fleming groups heard pūweto/spotless crane calls briefly on both Friday and Saturday nights. None of us were very familiar with crane calls and due to the location, thought it was more likely to be koitareke/marsh crane, but after listening to call recordings we began to doubt that... the birds kept us guessing for a couple more days until Petra and I could return to the wetland on Tuesday morning and confirmed that it is indeed pūweto living in there – another new bird record for the Lenz Reserve and a significant record for Otago. They responded promptly to play back, and we saw the birds as they came out into the open to tentatively inspect us from the edges of the tall *Carex secta*. Although we only saw one bird at a time there were certainly two individuals close by as we could hear them calling to each other. During the evening counts we heard one bird calling nearby with a distant reply from deep inside the wetland. We did try koitareke play back as well with no response recorded.



Our use of playback certainly unsettled the birds, which kept calling for over half an hour, and reminded me why I use it sparingly only for monitoring purposes.



Petra Simpson conducting pūweto/spotless crane playback from our somewhat precarious perch on drier ground. The birds emerged along the edge of the Carex sedge in the middle of the photo. Photo: Francesca Cunningham.

Outside of wetland surveys we delighted in the miromiro/SI tomtit family around the cabin where a busy father fed his three demanding fledglings and Craig would go on “Tomtit Patrol” resulting in some stunning photos.



A female miromiro/SI tomtit fledgling close behind its father.

Photo  
Craig McKenzie



We also visited two mātata/SI fernbird nests and a titipounamu/rifleman nest that our F&B team are monitoring as part of our nest success studies to help inform introduced predator control. A check of the mātata nests on the hot Tuesday showed the nestlings in one nest suffering from heat stress, spread out across the nest with their bills open and the adult birds straddling them with their wings open to shade their chicks, the adults also showing visible signs of heat stress. The earlier clutch from this pair fledged the day of the October snowfall... what more climate extremes will these birds face this season and into the future?

Thanks to everyone involved for a great and successful weekend and to the F&B Lenz Reserve Management Committee, Department of Conservation Murihiku, and several private landowners for enabling this wetland monitoring to take place. In addition thanks to the Otago Regional Council and BirdsNZ for leading this exciting wetland monitoring project across Otago. We look forward to learning more about the cryptic wetland birds in the southern Catlins region and we now have acoustic monitors deployed in wetlands from Curio Bay (south of the Otago border) up to Catlins Lake.

**Francesca Cunninghame**



Designs inspired by 'Buller's Birds' - beautiful images taken from the book, A History of the Birds of New Zealand by Walter Buller, published in the early 1870s.

Dutch artist, J.G. Keulemans, painted the illustrations which are remarkably lifelike considering he never stepped foot in New Zealand.

<https://www.nznature.co.nz>



## Programme 2022

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

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

The Meeting zoom link

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



### **Tuesday 22 Nov      Bird Quiz Night is happening**

Georgina has offered to be quizmaster with the help of Oscar; you may be asked to contribute questions so get you thinking caps on. As usual this will be our end-of-year event so please bring some festive food to share for supper if you are able. If you are a relatively new member this is a great time to meet others, so do come along.

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

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

**Final date for copy for next newsletter: 17 January 2023**