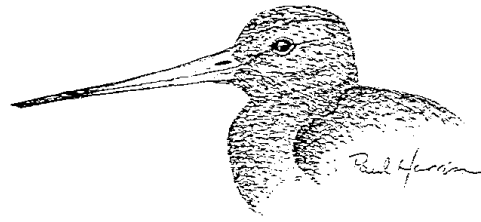


KUAKA

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

November 2022

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Greetings Kuaka readers, here is our November issue. We review this week's meeting, discussion on tuturiwhatu/dotterels and recent sightings. In addition, there is Sue's Ebird Atlas Report (the map of species per square makes interesting reading), details of the upcoming wader census, a short quiz for you, a piece from the Otago Birds newsletter on Rooks, and of course, we finish with our selection of the month's posts to our Facebook page. Also, for your reading pleasure we have attached a copy of the NZ Penguin Initiative's latest newsletter.

MONTHLY MEETING

If you couldn't join us last Tuesday night, this is what you missed:

🚩 Dotterel Watchers' reports from Awhitu.

- * Three newly hatched chicks at Wattle Bay. Fingers crossed for their survival. They have very attentive parents which should be a help. Oystercatcher pair preparing to nest.
- * At Orua Bay an emergency nest removal to higher up on the dune was required as the 3.9m tide got very close, and the 4.1m with nor-easter would have washed it out. Two eggs are settled in new spot, and a tape and signage are in place. The parents are a new young pair - fingers crossed for the next 3 weeks!
- * At Big Bay one chick of a brood of three has survived and is growing fast...hopefully fast enough to fend off dangers. A second pair and a oystercatcher pair, are preparing to nest. Neighbouring farmers (the Hoskins) have been recruited to monitor nests at Colbeck Spit. There has been no success getting Council to give the Spit special (dog free) status, but signs (from Waiuku College students) have been put up asking for "Dogs on Leads " at the start of the Spit.



Other dotterel reports:

- * Opaheke – the first pair and one of their banded fledglings have been seen on the nearby sports fields. See photo below. The second pair have only one chick remaining, now about five weeks old. We hope to band this week.
- * At Ardmore airfield – one chick about three weeks old and a nest with two eggs
- * At Waiata Shores (near Mahia Rd) – two pairs frequenting a field but no nests found yet
- * Clark’s Beach subdivision – nests destroyed by ploughing
- * Kidd’s shellbanks – one pair with three chicks and another pair with two chicks

Also at Opaheke Rd there are several pied stilt chicks and fledglings present. See photo below.

We have a small group of pied stilt/poaka breeding at Opaheke (near Papakura). The chicks are busy all day, searching for goodies to eat, watched over by their parents.



Banded and flagged dotterel adult photographed up Awhitu way. CHT was one of three chicks banded by Adrian on North Piha Beach on 02.02.19 when just four weeks old and had not been seen since it fledged in Feb 2019.

Dotterel chicks on the Auckland west coast are being banded to see if they stay on the coast as adults or move somewhere else so it was great that CHT has been spotted and reported.

SIGHTINGS

- 10 noisy Kaka flying overhead at the top of Homunga Bay track, north of Waihi Beach
 - One kakianau/black swan pair with eight cygnets and another with six cygnets, both on Awaiti Canal
 - Three pihoihoi/pipit at Golden Cross mine site
 - one tuturuatu/shore plover at Ray's Rest (Kaiaua coast)
 - two karearea/NZ falcon up Awhitu way
- Kidd's shellbanks – a Hudsonian Godwit, two Greater Sand Dotterel, eight Whimbrel, one Curlew Sandpiper, 49 PGP, one Far Eastern Curlew, over 4000 Bar-Tailed Godwit including juveniles and a bird flagged in Japan, 4000 Red Knot, 140 Ruddy Turnstone including one flagged.

We welcome contributions to our newsletters and Facebook page. **If you have sightings, birding spots that might interest others, bird table news, events, photos, conservation, pest control, behaviours that you have observed, and the like, do let us know.**

SPEAKER



This month Gillian Vaughan shared some interesting facts about feathers.

Feathers are composed of a form of keratin and there are 6 types:

· **Contour** – shafts with barbs and barbules, on the wing, tail, and body. Wing feathers are layered, used for flight, body feathers used for warmth, tail feathers stiff, used for stability and sometimes used for display. A peacock's decorative feathers are actually tail coverts covering the shorter tail feathers hidden underneath

- **Semi plume** – fluffy feathers under the body feathers, used for insulation
- **Down** – fluffy, closest to body, keep chicks warm before other feathers grow
- **Filoplumes** - all birds have these. These short, simple feathers are mostly on the wing and assist with flight by sensing the position of the contour feathers
- **Bristles** – very simple feathers, mostly found on the head, they have sensory and protective functions (a bit like whiskers)
- **Powder down** – these occur in only a few species of birds. They break down constantly to form a powder which is used to clean and waterproof the other feathers. Some birds have preening glands near the base of their tail which are used to clean feathers.

Feathers are not evenly distributed over the body, i.e., there are some bare patches.

Pterylae are those areas of the skin where feathers grow.

Feather colours are produced by:

- **Pigments** – carotenoids come from a bird's diet; melanins are genetic in origin; and porphyrins are



produced by modifying amino acids

- Structure – colour produced as light is refracted by the proteins in the feather, e.g., iridescence, as seen in tui, kereru, takahe. Birds who appear blue have brown feathers!
- A combination of both – e.g., birds of paradise

All feathers except powder down (which are replaced constantly) are replaced once a year (sometimes longer).

An update from the Birds New Zealand Moulting Recording Scheme

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Why is moulting important?

Moulting, migration, and reproduction make up the most energetically demanding events in a bird's life. But while some birds may forego breeding in a given year, and others avoid migration entirely, every bird must undergo an annual moult to maintain their plumage and its many functions!

- Determining where moulting fits into the annual cycle, how long it takes to complete, and how many feathers are replaced is important for understanding:
 - 1) vulnerability of a species during moult
 - 2) energetic-trade offs between moult and other important annual events
 - 3) age structure of a population and, ultimately,
 - 4) evolution of life histories

Our records

- **5970 records:** ~95% come from North and South Island.
- **137 species:** European introductions account for half of all records.
- **40% of records** are for birds in active primary moult.
- **80% of records** come from banded birds and **20%** from deceased specimens.

Number of moulting records

Primary moult

| New Zealand status | no | yes |
|--------------------|-------|-------|
| introduced | ~1500 | ~1500 |
| native | ~1000 | ~1000 |
| endemic | ~500 | ~500 |
| migrant | ~200 | ~200 |
| vagrant | ~100 | ~100 |

What is the Moulting Scheme?

- Birds New Zealand has recorded information on moulting for 40 years.
- Most data focus on replacement of primary feathers as well as secondaries and tail feathers.
- To understand the speed at which moulting progresses we score wing and tail feathers on a scale of 0 – 5 to indicate whether they are old, new, or in the process of being replaced.
- A moulting score is assigned by summing the feather scores within a particular feather tract (i.e., primaries, secondaries, or rectrices).

A Sooty Shearwater in active wing moult.
Photo: Mario Balabit

Feather scores

0 = old feather
1 = old feather missing or new feather completely enclosed in pin
2 = new feather starting to emerge from the pin, up to 1/3 grown
3 = new feather between 1/3 grown and 2/3 grown
4 = new feather between 2/3 grown and fully grown, but with some waxy sheath
5 = new fully grown feather with no sheath at base

Moving forward

- **Moulting Cards:** These will continue to play a core role in providing data on New Zealand birds, especially for those birds found dead on beaches or from collisions with vehicles, windows, and other structures.
- **Data Submission:** Banders can now submit information on primary moult using the new FALCON Bird Banding System website.
- **Photos:** Facebook, Instagram, and eBird host an enormous number of bird photos. We will be exploring the usefulness of gathering data on wing and tail moult for New Zealand species using these online resources.
- **Data Analysis:** We have sufficient data to characterize the timing and extent of primary moult for a number of introduced and native species. We hope to begin publishing this information in *Notornis*.
- **Moulting Limits:** Many species retain some juvenile coverts after their first moult resulting in moult limits. Moult limits can therefore be useful for age classification. Our goal is to assess whether moult limits are helpful for determining age class in birds of Aotearoa.

Contribute and collaborate with us

- **Anyone can contribute:** Banders, beach patrollers, post-graduate researchers and members of the public can all contribute. Every bird you handle, whether alive or dead, is an opportunity to collect information on moult. A huge thanks to all those who have contributed in the past to help make the Moulting Scheme a success!
- **International Collaborations:** We are currently working with an international team of researchers to examine how moult timing and duration may differ between introduced species found in New Zealand and populations within their native range.
- **Fully Digitized Moulting Records:** Do you have an idea for a research project using our moulting data? Contact us and let's collaborate!

An example of how to record a moulting score

Primary moult score = 4
Secondary moult score = 0

Primary moult score = 18
Secondary moult score = 7

CHRISTMAS BARBEQUE: 10 December 2022 - Kindly hosted this year by the Parry's,
Aka Aka Church Rd, from noon on Dec 10.

BBQ at 1pm, bring your own meat plus a salad or dessert to share

We will visit Stu Muir's property by the Waikato River in the afternoon.



SUMMER WADER CENSUS:

This year's summer census is in November:

- **Firth of Thames/Tikapa Moana-o-Hauraki: 13th Noema.** The 3 meter high-tide is at 11.31am
- **Manukau Harbour: 27th Noema.** This 4.1 meter high-tide is at 13.57pm

If you have never been involved with a wader census here is your opportunity. Give Tony Habraken a call, 09 2385284, and he will tell you what is involved. You won't be sent out on your own on the day, but will accompany an experienced census taker, so no need to worry about your wader ID skills – in fact this is your chance to enhance them.



Tara Photography Competition

November 3rd, 2022



Help us find out what White-fronted terns are eating and take part in this exciting photographic competition!

Details are available at nzseabirdtrust.com/tara

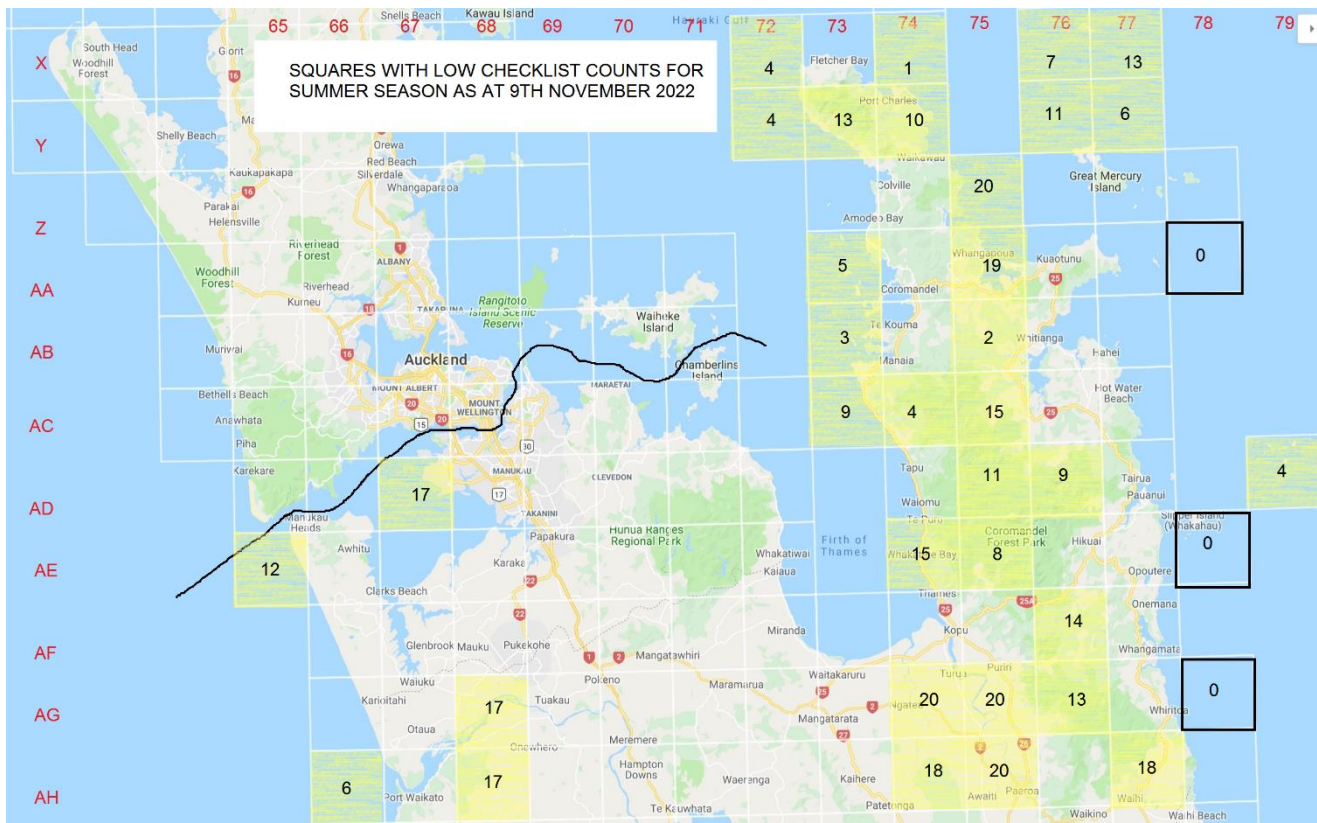
Submit your entries before **10 February 2023!**

EYE QUIZ Can you identify our native manu – answers on page 10



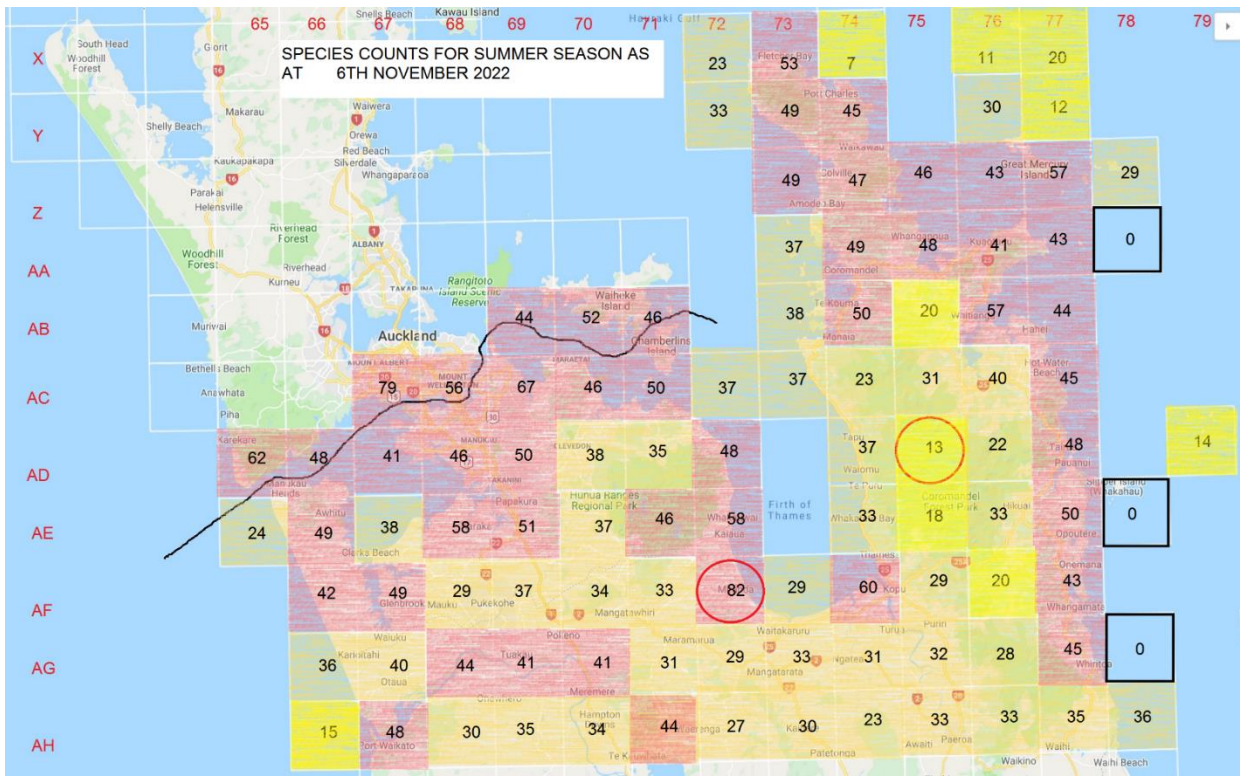
ATLAS REPORT NOVEMBER 2022

Over the last month, I have focussed my atlasing effort on the squares with low counts in the south and east of our region, and next week I will do the same at the top end and western coast of the Coromandel. This month I have provided two atlas maps for the upcoming summer season which begins on 1st December. The first map shows the yellow squares which have had 20 or fewer summer checklists. Most of these are in the Coromandel region or Hauraki Plains.



The second map was suggested by David Lawrie and shows the number of **species** for each square for the summer season (total for last 3 summers). Please note:

- The yellow squares have had 1-20 species recorded
- The orange squares have had 21-40 species recorded
- The red squares have had 41 or more species recorded. Most of these are squares which have both land and coastal habitats so a greater variety of birds might expect to be found
- In some but not all cases, the lower number of species in a square will be due to the low number of checklists done there
- The square with the highest number of species is AF72 Miranda, followed by AC67 Ambury
- The square with the lowest number of species is AD75, which is mostly bush and only has the Tapu-Coroglen Rd running through it. A few other squares do have less species, but they are not easily accessible, e.g., offshore islands or tiny strips of coastal land.

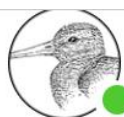


If you are travelling in our region over the summer, please consider doing some atlasing in one or more of the squares that have low checklist or species numbers. Otherwise, continue to look out for target species, and do some night counts too. If you didn't get a target list from me, let me know. If you find something interesting, try to take at least 5 minutes and record all the other species that you recognise. Enter the details into the atlas or send me the following details: Exact location of sighting, Date, Start Time, duration of count, Species, Number of birds seen

Wiebke Reiff-Dwenger
1d · 🌐

This lady is wandering around with the best attitude: Sue Frostick is one of almost 1100 people counting birds for a nationwide long-term survey. The aim of this project by **Birds New Zealand** is to map the distribution of the country's bird species between 2019 and 2024.

... See more



**Birds New Zealand: South
Auckland Branch**



Oct 30 · 🌐

Our contact in Ararimu sent us this great photo:
" I heard the blackbirds screeching about 3pm.
Thinking my cat might be around I had a look
to see if there was a nest up in the trees. But
instead this ruru
was silently staring at me."

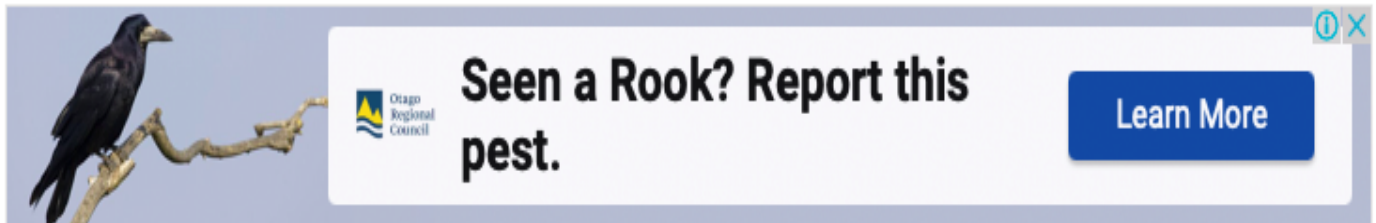


ANSWERS TO THE MANU EYE QUIZ on page 6:

Top: L-R kereru, karearea/NZ falcon, tui, tauhou/silvereeye, kaka

Middle: L-R kakariki/yellow-crowned parakeet, kakaruwai/South Island robin, kahu/swamp harrier, whio, korimako/bellbird.

Bottom: L-R ruru, mohua, kea, riroriro/grey warbler, titipounamu/rifleman.



WHY DO THE REGIONAL COUNCILS HAVE IT IN FOR ROOKS?

Having lived in the UK for 13 years and travelled extensively in Europe, one of the familiar sights are the rooks returning to their rookeries in the evenings. During the day they are seen in varying numbers out and about on pastures and ploughed fields, doing their business – eating the bugs and grubs that eat the crops and pastures. They obviously don't cause extensive crop damage as farmers still seem to get satisfactory harvests.

But, for some reason, here in NZ the rook is cast as a villain - a monstrous black bird responsible for ripping out crops and predated the countryside. They are harried from place to place; shot, poisoned, have their eggs and nests destroyed and are generally vilified.

I have enjoyed seeing the small populations of Rooks about in NZ, in the same manner I enjoy seeing song thrushes, yellowhammers, redpolls and the rest. They don't belong in NZ but are generally better than the bird-less pastures we would otherwise have.

So why pick on the rooks? (Ok, feral pigeons have had a hard time too, but the regional councils don't seem to have the same enthusiasm for pursuing them).

When it comes down to it, it appears to be because they are big and black and make an obvious target. Farmers have decided they damage crops (Really? These birds are mainly carnivores!) and that is reason enough. And, for some reason, rabbits, hares, deer, goats and pigs don't come into it at all – when did you last hear of a farmer who had the ORC on their property for the purpose of eliminating rabbits?

So, I was disappointed to see the ORC vendetta given prominence in September's [Otago] newsletter. Are we as an organisation now promoting the slaughter of introduced bird species in NZ? If this is the case,

we should encourage the regional councils to consider the other birds threatening NZ – should we be hunting the skylark as a competitor of the pipit? Will we one day, in a distant and hopeful future, find ourselves setting out to hunt down kiwi because their night time foraging is damaging crops? Perhaps the current atlassing effort can be used to target these damned invaders and work out how to eliminate them all!

Imagine going out atlassing with no introduced species to track down, admire and tick. Large swathes of NZ would be bird-less. Oh, but wait, if we are to eliminate all introduced species, we won't be here either! Phew!

Suzanne Schofield from the Otago Branch of BirdsNZ

FROM OUR FACEBOOK PAGE:

If you don't follow our page here are some of the posts that may be of interest.

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



Petrel Colony Tours

Oct 30 · 🌐

For the 3rd year now the NZ Transport Agency will switch off the streetlights through Punakaiki from 7 November to 9 January 2023 to reduce the fallout problem that occurs every fledgling season. The chicks are now very fat and the oldest of them will be starting to emerge from their burrow any day now. Here's hop... See more



Ron Chew ▶ **Birds Auckland**

Oct 21

Caspian Tern...the superjumbo A380 of the tern world, seen here in breeding plumage. Oct 2022 Auckland



LiveScience ✓

1d · 🌐

Erect-crested penguins commonly perform a practice that's rare in birds: They lay an egg only to reject it, to ensure the survival...see more



LIVESCIENCE.COM

In 'bizarre behavior,' New Zealand penguins lay one egg, reject it, and then lay another. ...
They're one of the only bird species to do this.



Interesting Engineering

posted an episode of **Engineers' Muse.**

1d · 🌐

Bullet trains in Japan used to make a loud boom sound when they traveled through tunnels. A bird-watching engineer wa...see more

