

BIRDS NEW ZEALAND

Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa

No.36 December 2022



The Magazine of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand



BIRDS

NEW ZEALAND

Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa



PUBLISHERS

Published on behalf of the members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc), P.O. Box 834, Nelson 7040, New Zealand.

Email: secretary@birdsnz.org.nz Website: www.birdsnz.org.nz

Editor: Michael Szabo, 6/238 The Esplanade, Island Bay, Wellington 6023.

Email: editor.birdsnz@birdsnz.org.nz Tel: (04) 383 5784

ISSN 2357-1586 (Print) ISSN 2357-1594 (Online)

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.

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/



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Details of how to enter and prizes are here:

https://www.nzseabirdtrust.com/files/ugd/de29ab_16aa86043ac848fa825368e9779a7b40.pdf

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COVER IMAGE

Pīwauwau/Rock Wren, Otira Valley.

Photo by Mike Ashbee: <https://www.mikeashbeephotography.com/>



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From the President's Desk

Council Meeting

Council has had one online meeting during the past three months. Meeting online enables Council to keep on top of a large amount of business. Council was updated on Health and Safety matters that had been reported and reviewed a summary of cash expenditure prepared by Treasurer Paul Garner-Richards. We also agreed to start implementation of a communications, membership and fundraising project to build the Society's profile and membership, which will be rolled out over the next three years. The Society carries Public Liability Insurance, and this was recently renewed. Public Liability Insurance is a class of insurance which covers an individual for any claim made against the Society and our members for a wrongful act when undertaking or participating in Society activities. Society activities are generally those which are part of regional and national schemes, or which are included in regional programmes. In the unlikely event that you may think you need such insurance then please contact me in the first instance. Council continues to investigate the necessary change to meet the new standards required by the new Incorporated Societies Act 2021.

Historical Publications

The Society website has a new tab under publications. This is to publish historical publications of the Society and others. I'm pleased to be able to report that the first publication has been posted under the title, "*Annotated Index to Some Early New Zealand Bird Literature*". The index was compiled by Helen C. Oliver who was the Librarian of the Department of Internal Affairs and was published as Wildlife Publication No. 106. I thank the Department for Conservation for releasing this publication under an open Creative Commons License. I've already had a look for records of Australian Coot for a project.

This series complements the Society's journal *Notornis*, *Birds New Zealand* magazine, and *Occasional Publications* on the website by providing a place where books, booklets and other documents having historical significance to New Zealand ornithology can be made available to readers in a digital format. Historical Publications can be documents published by the Society in the past and are now out-of-print. They can also be significant publications on ornithology that have been published by a third party. Possible topics for this series might include reviews, indexes, and technical manuals. Documents in this series will be published as digital PDFs. Authors or editors who wish to propose documents for the Historical Publications series should contact Birds New Zealand Council with suggestions for editorial processes

Increase in Website 'Traffic'

Councillors were a bit surprised recently to learn that we were being billed a new, higher rate for hosting of our website. After some investigation we discovered that the cause of the increased bill was that the number of visits or 'traffic' to our website has been such that we have moved into a new price band and our webhost partner Xequals had been forced to pass on the increased costs. Although it was a bit of a surprise that we had an increase in this cost, it is pleasing to know that our website is so popular that usage continues to grow.

2022 Australasian Shorebird Conference

I was able to attend the 12th Australasian Shorebird Conference which was held online in the last weekend of October. Some 130 people from Australasia, East Asia, North America and

Europe registered for the conference. Over two days some 30 presentations from around the East Asian-Australasian Flyway area made for a fascinating two days. Highlights for me were work from Sarawak on stopover sites for Far Eastern Curlew, efforts to understand and improve dog-walking practises at Christchurch, and further detailed documentation of the importance of habitats along the Yellow Sea coast. It was a tightly run two days but I missed the banter and chat that would have happened with a face-to-face conference.

Completion of a New Look for the Beach Patrol Scheme

Since the last Council meeting, work has been completed on the new Beach Patrol portal on the Society's website. The new method of data entry has been designed to reduce the steps in submitting data and ensuring that it is curated promptly and added to the database. As at March 2022, the database comprises nearly 30,000 records; more than 440,000 birds have been counted. So, this database has considerable national significance. Commencing in late 2022 a new submission procedure for beach patrol records will be introduced that will enable observers to submit records from their own computer at home.

Members are encouraged to continue to submit Beach Patrol observations. Council hopes that this new approach and design for submitting Beach Patrol observations will encourage members to continue to contribute to this important long-running Birds New Zealand Scheme. It is also hoped that more of our newer and younger members will be encouraged to walk along their region's beaches and contribute observations in order to continue and extend the Beach Patrol effort that has been made by more than 300 members over the last 70 years.

I recently had a conversation with Ian MacLean who rang to report a disturbing incident where beach patrollers had been abused by other beach users. His call was disturbing because members had been subjected to unnecessary and inappropriate abuse. I was pleased that Ian had followed the Society procedures and promptly reported in as we were able to discuss this incident and develop a reasoned approach to what to do in future. This is an example of where the Society Health and Safety policy worked as it should.

2023 Membership Renewals

As we approach the end of the year, I would like to remind members that 2023 annual memberships are renewable on the anniversary of your joining date. This can be done via the Society's website, either by a direct credit payment or a credit card payment: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/login/#myaccount>

Bird Atlasing

I notice that the NZ Bird Atlas team continue to post monthly challenges. Dan and the team are promoting getting records of cryptic species and I'll be closely examining the NZ Bird Atlas website to see where I can add some records. Also, as the summer holiday season approaches I'll be checking the website to find squares which need more data. It's an interesting way to plan family holidays!

Finally, as the festive season and the end of 2022 approaches, I wish you all the very best for the summer break and hope that among time with family you all find time to get out and enjoy some birding.

BRUCE MCKINLAY, PRESIDENT

2023 NZ Bird Conference & Birds New Zealand AGM

The 2023 Conference and Birds New Zealand AGM will be held in New Plymouth, Taranaki during King's Birthday weekend (3rd-4th June). All events and meals will be held at The Devon Hotel, New Plymouth. See www.birdsnz.org.nz for registration details, or contact your regional representative.

2 June 2023 (Friday)

18:00 – 19:30 Registration

3 June 2023 (Saturday)

08:00 – 09:00 Registration

09:00 – 17:00 Scientific Day One

19:00 Informal Dinner

4 June 2023 (Sunday)

08:00 – 09:00 Registration

09:00 – 15:30 Scientific Day Two

15:30 – 17:00 Awards and AGM

19:00 Conference Dinner

5 June 2023 (Monday) Field Trips

Lake Rotokare Sanctuary

Lake Mangamahoe, Waiwhakairo River mouth & Lake Rotomanu
Pukekura Park

Call for Nominations for Council

The three-year Council term of Keith Woodley, Mel Galbraith and Lynne Anderson (Secretary) will expire at the next AGM (2023). Lynne Anderson will not be standing again. Nominations are called for these positions. Note that the incumbents are eligible to stand again. Nominations will close with the Secretary on 28th February 2023. Nominations must be signed by two financial members of the Society and be consented to in writing by the person nominated who must also be a financial member of the Society. Would nominators please include a brief curriculum vitae of the nominated person if that person is not already a member of Council. Nomination forms are available on the website (<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/about-us/manual/forms/>). Please send to Lynne Anderson, Secretary, PO Box 834, Nelson or email to secretary@birdsnz.org.nz

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The 2023 Annual General Meeting (for the year ending December 2022) will be held on 5th June, 2023 at The Devon Hotel, 390 Devon Street East, New Plymouth.
Lynne Anderson, Secretary, PO Box 834, Nelson.
Email: secretary@birdsnz.org.nz

Calls for Notices of Motion

Notices of any motion to be considered by the 2023 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before 28th February 2023, be in writing and be signed by the mover and seconder who shall be financial members of the Society. Please send to Lynne Anderson, Secretary, P.O. Box 834, Nelson or email to secretary@birdsnz.org.nz

Fledgling Fund grants

Our Fledgling Fund provides grants to encourage student members to attend the NZ Bird Conference and AGM. Each grant covers the cost of the conference registration fee and attending the dinner. Applicants must have been a student member for two or more years and enrolled full-time at a NZ tertiary institution or secondary school. Only one grant can be awarded per student member. The criteria and application form are here: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/awards-and-prizes/notornis-and-conference-awards/fledgling-grant/> Applications must be submitted to the Secretary (secretary@birdsnz.org.nz) by 28 February 2023.

2023 Membership Renewals

Annual memberships are renewable on the anniversary of your joining date. Renewal reminders are sent out at regular intervals starting six weeks before your renewal date, and will continue until six weeks after the due date, until your annual subscription has been paid. You can renew your membership via the website, either by a direct credit payment or a credit card payment:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/login/#myaccount>

The Society depends on your subscription, so please pay promptly. Please also notify the Membership Secretary if your email address has changed since your last renewal:
membership@birdsnz.org.nz

The Gift of Birds

Are you looking for a Christmas gift to give? You can gift someone a 2023 Birds New Zealand subscription for \$1.50 a week to help foster a lifetime of enjoyment and study of birds. Please send an email to eo@osnz.org.nz and we will send you the Gift Voucher, or visit our website for more details: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/news/christmas-gift/>

Making a donation

We work hard to ensure a better future for our birds, but to continue our work we need your support. We are a registered charity (CC 41020) which means tax credits are available for donations made in NZ. You can donate in two ways:

* Deposit funds into the Birds New Zealand bank account:

02-0290-0164715-00

* Make a credit card payment online: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/donate/>

Leaving a Gift in your will

No matter how much, 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. The two options are:

* *Specific Legacy*: Leaving a specific amount of money, shares, bonds, items, or a nominated Gift to Birds New Zealand, or

* *Residual Legacy*: Leaving 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

New Members

Birds New Zealand warmly welcomes all of our new members: Michael E Ramsbottom (Northland); Taneal Gulliver, Paloma Pereira, Chris Harris, Peter Wills, Alan Rollason, Maria del Castillo, Cathy Brickhill, Laureline Meynier, Arthur Bensana, Hui Zhen Tan (Auckland); Kim Fryer (Sth Auck); Clare Harrison, Cecily Horne, Victoria Brosnahan (BoP); Beverly Clunies-Ross (Waikato); Tama Blackburn (Taranaki); Wendy Stothers, Joanna Ebbett, Annabel Beattie, Nataliya Rik (Hawkes Bay); Abi Wightman, Zoe Stone (Manawatu); Marisa King (Wairarapa); Winifred Long, Jonathan Hartley, Steve Halley (Wellington); Caroline Crick, Britta Steude, Paul Alexander Russell (Nelson); Paul Jeffries (Marlborough); Alec Huisman, Richard Jones, Bruce Digby (Canterbury); Bianca Keys, Fayas Mohamed, Rayna Dickson, Erin Drummond, Vernon Finch, Abby Clarke, Brian Lowe, Johanna Daugherty (Otago); Quinlan Mann (Canada); Harold Ytsma (NL).

Donations

We would also like to thank the following for their generous donations: Cecily Horne, Steve Halley, Mikayla Kendle, Joanna Ebbett, Ken Fraser, Harold Ytsma, Nataliya Rik.

David Medway Scholarship

Sponsored by the George Mason Charitable Trust and named in commemoration of David Medway, this provides financial support to a student studying full-time at post-graduate level on a topic relating to ornithology. One scholarship may be awarded annually with a maximum value of \$5000. Applications open 1st February 2023 and close 30th March 2023. The application form is here:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/funding/david-medway-scholarship/>

Marj Davis Scholarship

Established in 2018 in commemoration of Marj Davis, a single scholarship may be awarded annually with a maximum value of \$1500 to provide financial support to a full-time Masters or PhD student conducting research in ornithology. Eligible research projects must clearly be of benefit to NZ ornithology and NZ birds. Preference will be given to proposals for research expected to contribute to a greater knowledge of birds in the Canterbury/West Coast region. Applications open 1st February 2023 and close 30th March 2023. The application form is here:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/funding/marj-davis-scholarship/>

Pacific Islands Bird Conservation & Research Fund

This supports conservation management and research on bird species classed as endangered by BirdLife International that breed on Pacific Islands, excluding NZ. Administered by J S Watson Trust through Forest and Bird, it is a result of a working partnership between Birds New Zealand and Forest and Bird. As a guide, a grant shall not exceed \$5000. One or more grants may be awarded at any one time at the Trust's discretion. Applications open 1st February 2023 and close on 30th March 2023

(eo@birdsnz.org.nz). Criteria and details:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/funding/pibcrf/>

DOC Sounds of Science podcast

Every bird band tells a story, and DOC's Banding Office has hundreds of thousands of them. Banding allows us to follow the lives of individual birds, and in some cases, their stories can defy our assumptions of bird behaviour. Each story involves not only the banded bird, but the bander and the person that reported a re-sighting event. Banding Officer Michelle Bradshaw tells some of these stories on the Department of Conservation's Sounds of Science podcast – each episode features the Threatened Species Ambassador interviewing various technical experts, scientists, rangers and the experts in between. Learn about the first rule of bird banding; looking at things from the bird's perspective; how one banded bird ended up securing funding for pest control; and a very big penguin! To listen, head to: doc.govt.nz/news/podcast

New Membership Secretary

In 2012 my wife and I moved to Rotorua from Scotland and for half that time I worked at Wingspan National Bird of Prey Centre where I used my professional skills in marketing/business administration and my passion for wildlife photography to promote raptor conservation. Since then we have moved to Dunedin. When the role of Birds New Zealand Membership Secretary came up, I volunteered as it gave me another opportunity to offer my services to the conservation of birds in Aotearoa.

One question I keep getting asked is, "What do you do with your photographs?" Each year I publish a calendar of my photography and my 2023 Birds of New Zealand calendar is out now, and can be purchased here: <https://www.igallopfree.com/shop/product/529239/birds-of-new-zealand--nga-manu-o-aotearoa-2023-calendar/>

For any membership related enquiries, please send me an email: membership@birdsnz.org.nz

KURIEN (KOSHY) YOHANNAN



▣ Grey Phalarope in breeding plumage: John Fennell/NZ Birds Online.

NZ Birds Online updated

A revised and expanded version of the NZ Birds Online website was published online in May, which matches changes in the *Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand* 5th edition. This is the most extensive update since it was launched in 2013. In addition to new pages added, many scientific names have changed, Te Reo Māori names have been made more prominent, the sequence of taxa has been aligned with the new Checklist, content updated, and a hyperlink to each new species' entry in the Checklist. All existing hyperlinks have been updated, and there are thousands of new hyperlinks to references. Many thanks to Dallas Bishop and Geoff de Lisle for seeking and testing all these hyperlinks, and to Dallas for assistance with adding them to the website.

Two vagrant species first found in NZ in Jan/Feb 2022 were added to the NZ checklist and NZ Birds Online in May: Black Tern and Black-naped Tern. Three species pages were also added after the Checklist Committee split three pairs of taxa: Black Swan/Kakīānau and NZ Swan/Matapu, Eurasian Whimbrel/American Whimbrel, and Otago Shag/Matapo and Foveaux Shag/Mapo. A further 15 fossil species have been added.

New master images have been selected for Manx Shearwater, Grey Phalarope, White-winged Black Tern, and St Bathans Owllet Nightjar. Congratulations to all the photographers involved, particularly John Fennell, Philip Griffin, Roger Smith, Oscar Thomas, Glenda Rees, and Cyril Vathelet for their superb images of living species. Congratulations and thanks are also due to Jacob Blokland and Simone Giovanardi for their stunning reconstructions of fossil penguins and waterfowl.

A record of a beach-wrecked Matsudaira's Storm Petrel found on Muriwai Beach in May 2022 has since been accepted by the Records Appraisal Committee and a new page added to the website. Any photos of this little-known species will be gratefully received (colin.miskelly@tepapa.govt.nz).

COLIN MISKELLY, NEW ZEALAND BIRDS ONLINE EDITOR

Applications of Interest – *Notornis* Associate Editor

Paul Sagar, Assistant Editor of *Notornis*, recently "retired" so an opportunity opens for a prospective replacement. I invite expressions of interest for a local ornithologist who can support me as Editor, and who may envisage taking over as full editor in future. As volunteer Associate Editor you will need to commit a fraction of the time that I usually do to prepare four issues a year. The main tasks are reading and assisting prepare publications in each issue. I am usually able to do this during evenings and school holidays. The job description of Assistant Editor is not written in stone and I am open to discussion on how specific tasks may suit different individuals suitable for the role. In fact, the opportunity exists for multiple roles in Assistant Editor positions that focus on specific support functions, e.g. editing and formatting of final manuscripts in preparation for printers, figure and map preparation for authors with limited resources and skills, assistance for authors with limited publishing experience in writing in the scientific format. For further enquiries contact Dr Craig Symes: notornis.editor@gmail.com

Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2022

We manage this fund on behalf of T/GEAR Charitable Trust and briefly summarise the 2022 grants here. Full details of all funded research are posted online on our website:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/funding/birds-nz-research-fund/>

Conservation genetics of Mohua

Endemic to the South Island and Rakiura, the Mohua/Yellowhead was historically found throughout most unmodified forests. Present-day populations are small and isolated, making them vulnerable to genetic drift and inbreeding. Both can lead to genetic diversity being lost. Supplementing declining mainland populations with new additional individuals could help the recovery of the species. Using genotyping-by-sequencing our project will analyse Mohua from mainland populations as well as translocated populations on Breaksea, Chalky, Whenua Hou and Anchor islands to investigate genetic diversity and structure. We aim to determine if the island populations are suitable sources for translocations back to the mainland. Our preliminary results indicated slightly reduced genetic diversity in the island populations.

Financial support from the 2022 Bird New Zealand Research Fund will allow for the analysis of mitochondrial DNA, thereby further resolving the phylogeography of Mohua. This will provide insights into how representative the Mohua populations on islands are of those on the mainland. Understanding the phylogeography of the Mohua will further provide valuable insights into female dispersal and historical abundance, which are essential for the conservation management of Mohua populations. This project is a collaboration between the University of Otago, the Department of Conservation, and the Mohua Recovery Group.

JOHANNA KANN, DR LUDOVIC DUTOIT &
PROFESSOR BRUCE ROBERTSON, UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

Western Weka in the alpine zone

Weka are one of New Zealand's native avian predators and play an important role in ecosystems as omnivorous scavengers and seed dispersers. However, the impact of invasive mammal predators in NZ has disrupted the natural predator-prey balance. Consequently Weka are often omitted from restoration projects due to concerns they may negatively affect vulnerable species via predation. There is a lack of knowledge about Weka ecology in systems without invasive mammals, particularly in the alpine zone. My research will evaluate the home ranges and habitat use of western Weka in the alpine environment of Secretary Island, a largely predator-free island (a small number of stoats remain) in Fiordland, in order to better understand Weka ecology in the alpine zone.

During my study period (summer 2022/23) endangered Sinbad Skinks will be translocated to a release site in the alpine zone of Secretary Island. My study will also assess any interactions between Weka and skinks to better understand the potential impact of Weka on low-density prey populations using trail cameras and direct observation, and will hopefully provide valuable information for conservation managers as to potential Weka impacts, and how this can be managed. Support from the 2022 Birds New Zealand Research Fund and the Department of Conservation will allow me to purchase VHF transmitters and GPS loggers to attach to Weka. GPS loggers will provide high-resolution data by collecting location points of Weka every 30-60 minutes over a four month period. A fellow student, Connor McNicholl, will also use the GPS data for his research project to answer aligned research questions.

CLARE GUNTON (MSc STUDENT, UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO),
DR JO MONKS & DR JO CARPENTER
(MANAAKI WHENUA/LANDCARE RESEARCH)



▣ Tara with fish, Waikanae Sandspit (8/11/22): Michael Szabo.

Tara diet and population survey with photo competition

The aims for this research project being supported by the 2022 Birds New Zealand Research Fund are to survey the diet of Tara/White-fronted Tern with prey identified through a photo competition run across the 2022-2023 breeding season, and to continue surveys for Tara colonies in the Hauraki Gulf. Tara breed colonially in a wide range of sites. The species is widespread and, at times, locally numerous. In a few cases where breeding has been followed at a location for several successive years, previous surveys have shown the transient nature of the Tara's occupancy of individual sites, with a site being used in one year sometimes wholly or largely being abandoned the next. The reasons for this are poorly known: disturbance; increasing predation; flooding; and shifting food supplies have been suggested. We will also continue colony counts in the Hauraki Gulf region into a fourth season.

The photo component aims to gather important data primarily on Tara prey, but also provide greater coverage of population, breeding success, and geographical and temporal variation. We will also investigate Tara response to pressures at nesting sites, foraging areas, and to changing environment conditions including climate change. We also aim to establish a database of photo records of Tara with identifiable prey items over the 2022-2023 breeding season, linked geographically. Entries will be judged in three categories: best picture of a tern/s carrying identifiable prey; most unique prey species captured; and best photo portfolio of birds carrying identifiable prey items through different breeding stages and including colony counts for a single colony or multiple colonies.

CHRIS GASKIN, NORTHERN NZ SEABIRD TRUST

New OSNZ Occasional Publications series

We have a new publication series to complement *Notornis* and this magazine. The 'Ornithological Society of New Zealand Occasional Publications' series was launched in May, with the publication of OSNZ Occasional Publication No. 1 (5th edition of the Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand), and OSNZ Occasional Publication No. 2 (*Amendments to the 2010 Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand*). The new series provides an option for authors or editors when preparing or processing a manuscript that may be too large or outside the scope of our other publication series. This could include (but is not restricted to) technical manuals, monographs, and faunal lists. OSNZ Occasional Publications are published in electronic (PDF) format on the Society's website, but this does not preclude hardcopy publication if supported or sought by the Society's Council. If you are considering preparing or submitting a manuscript that you think could be published as an OSNZ Occasional Publication, please contact Council. More information: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/society-publications/occasional-publications/>

COLIN MISKELLY, COUNCIL MEMBER

Project Assistance Fund 2023

Each year we make grants for bird research and dissemination of information about birds. The maximum is usually \$2000. Individuals or groups who are current Birds New Zealand members may apply. Applications close 30 March 2023 and are considered at the June Council meeting. Guidelines and application form: www.birdsnz.org.nz/funding/paf/



▣ Kāhu: Les Feasey/NZ Birds Online.

Newly uncovered parasites in Kāhu

Knowledge of New Zealand bird parasites is very poor, and there are virtually no records of helminth parasites in the Swamp Harrier/Kāhu. In a small preliminary sample we have found Kāhu infected with at least six types of helminths, all of which are new host records, and this is probably an underestimation.

At least four belong to genera with species known to cause harmful pathologies in their hosts. For this project we plan to dissect circa 20 Kāhu carcasses that we have and recover all helminths from them. This will also include photography, measurements, and samples taken for DNA sequencing and electron microscopy. The data will then be presented in a peer-reviewed journal.

Identification of their helminth parasites will shed light on whether the NZ population of Kāhu has its own suite of parasites, compared to populations elsewhere, or whether it brought its suite of parasites with it when Swamp Harriers arrived from Australia circa 1000 years ago. While the Kāhu may be a common bird that is not threatened, it is related to, and shares habitat with, the New Zealand Falcon/Karearea, which is a threatened species. If we know what parasites infect the Kāhu we will be better placed to look out for such infections in cases of sickness or death in the rarer Karearea. We would like to thank the 2022 Birds New Zealand Research Fund for its financial support.

BRONWEN PRESSWELL, UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

Spine-tailed Swift 1968-69 Invasion – Request for Information

In 1968-69 an invasion of Spine-tailed Swifts (since renamed White-throated Needletails) occurred in New Zealand. However, no details have ever been published as to the actual extent and the total number of records is unknown. I have found the following records: Kaipara Flats, Warkworth, Northland - 21/11/67 - 6 (F.P. Hudson, 1968, *Notornis* 15:42); Awanui road, Kaitaia, Far North - 28/11/67 - 2 (M. Mathews. R. Michie; 1968, *Notornis* 15:35); Bluff Hill, Southland - 18/2/68 - 6 (R.R. Sutton, 1972, *Notornis* Suppl. 69); Waitare Beach, Wellington West - 23/11/68 - 1 beach-wrecked (O. Torr; Imber & Crockett, 1970, *Notornis* 17:225) Specimen OR.015006 Te Papa Museum (Hokio Beach); Timaru Beach Road, Taranaki - 1/11/68 - 1 beach-wrecked (Imber & Crockett, 1970, *Notornis* 17:225); Bluff Hill, Southland - 16/8/69 - 1 (R.R. Sutton, 1972, *Notornis* Suppl. 69); Ahipara, Far North - 1969 (R. Michie; 1971, *Notornis* 18:129); Awanui, Far North - 1969 (H.A.F.; 1971, *Notornis* 18:129). I would like to receive any NZ records, even second- or third-hand, of this species between 1967-69, in order to document the invasion properly, hopefully in *Notornis*. Please email me (george.watola@sky.com) if you can help.

GEORGE WATOLA



▣ Tarapirohe adult feeding chick: Baylee Connor-McClean/WMIL.

Clarence Tarapirohe breeding success

Every year 400-800 Tarapirohe/Black-fronted Terns nest on the Waiau Toa/Clarence River. Since 2012, Wildlife International Management Ltd (WMIL) have been monitoring their breeding success on the Waiau Toa and Acheron rivers. In 2015, a five-year response plan was initiated where a one kilometre trapping grid was established around three selected enhanced islands. With enhanced nesting habitat and predator trapping, Tarapirohe breeding success began to rise within these areas.

In 2020, the trapping network was redesigned and expanded to create one long trapping line that followed both sides of a 26km stretch of river along the Waiau Toa. By the start of the 2021/2022 breeding season, the 52km trapping line was completed with 778 traps opened. In addition, several island enhancements were carried out within this area, prior to the return of Tarapirohe. This provides better nesting habitat, protection from flooding events, and isolation from predators on the mainland. Temporary plywood chick shelters were also placed in colonies near nests to help protect chicks from extreme heat and avian predators.

As a result, in 2021/2022 Tarapirohe had their most successful breeding season on the Waiau Toa/Clarence River of the past 10 monitored years, with 68% of nests hatching at least one egg and between 123 and 190 chicks fledging altogether. The project is funded by Canterbury Regional Council (ECan), Land Information New Zealand (LINZ), and the Department of Conservation (DOC). WMIL is contracted by DOC (project manager) to carry out all the Tarapirohe monitoring and trapping work in the Waiau Toa.

Titi conservation conundrum on Kapiti Island

Sooty Shearwater/Titi have been decreasing at an alarming rate for decades and have disappeared from many former nesting sites. On Kāpiti Island, the formerly abundant Titi have decreased to an historically low chick productivity of 2 chicks per year in 2021 and none in 2022. The reasons need to be quantified but are likely a mix of large-scale shifts in marine conditions and predation by Weka. On nearby Mana Island, Weka are absent and the Titi population is stable. With this unique situation of the two islands so close to each other, Mana can act as a study control. We aim to 1) quantify influence of abiotic/oceanographic variables on breeding and chick stress/survival, 2) quantify influence of biotic parameters (Weka predation) on chick survival and 3) develop an integrated population model to predict the future of the Titi population and the outcomes of possible solutions.

To test our hypothesis that only part of the Weka population may be preying on Titi, we will assess Weka distribution on Kāpiti with GPS tracking. The 2022 Birds New Zealand Research Fund will cover this cost. We aim to assess a range of options to be discussed in a structured decision-making process with DOC, iwi and conservation groups. The aim is to avoid relying solely on Western science and top-down implementation to practice inclusion by considering the cultural values of iwi and their knowledge of the ecosystem. We aim to understand the factors driving the decline and identify best management steps. This research will serve as a basis to reduce Weka predation and lift Titi chick survival across Kāpiti, and in central Aotearoa New Zealand.

ETIENNE OSSONA DE MENDEZ, JOHANNES FISCHER, GRAEME TAYLOR, JOHN EWEN & BRENDON DUNPHY



▣ Male Miromiro feeding chicks, Wellington: Tony Stoddard



▣ Female Kiwi-Nui or North Island Brown Kiwi: Isobel Castro.

Geographic/vocal variation in Miromiro

Bird songs and calls within a species can vary geographically and between sexes. This can be caused by geographic variation (bird 'dialects'), dispersal between populations, and evolutionary selective pressures (social or environmental). Between-sex variation forms due to differences in learning mechanisms, dispersal patterns, or physiology. With the support of the 2022 Birds New Zealand Research Fund, this project will document and compare geographic and between-sex vocal variation in mainland Miromiro/NZ Tomtit in five areas (Bay of Islands, Waitakere & Hunua Ranges, Boundary Stream, Wellington). Findings will contribute to understanding dispersal and geneflow between populations, and sex-differences in dispersal patterns and vocalisation functions. The project also aims to collect DNA samples from North Island Miromiro populations as part of a future study. Therefore, this collection of acoustic and DNA data will lay a foundation for future study of Miromiro.

ANA MENZIES, MSc STUDENT, UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND

Titi range retraction within NZ

Marine heatwaves and climate change are having impacts on seabirds in New Zealand and globally. Even with predator control, survey data shows Titi/Sooty Shearwater numbers in decline at the northern boundaries of their distribution suggesting a range retraction to the south. This species is highly sensitive to temperature increases and anecdotal evidence suggests that warming seas throughout the NZ waters (and beyond) may be driving this observed pattern of decline locally. At their northern colonies Titi appear to be getting slowly replaced by the more temperate Flesh-footed Shearwater. In a pilot study supported by the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2020 we compared physiological stress of Titi adults and chicks from around NZ to see if we could detect the effects of elevated water temperatures on these birds during the 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22 breeding seasons.

Weights and feather samples of chicks were taken at four sites during 2022 (Kauwahaia Island/Auckland, Mana Island/Wellington, Sandfly Bay/Otago, Seal Bay/Southland). We found that weights of Titi chicks at Kauwahaia Island were 25% lower than other sites suggesting that decline in numbers of this species may be brought about by decreased provisioning and nutritional stress (less food). There was also a reduction in average adult weight of both species across the study. Such losses in weight also correlate with a warming of nearshore waters of the west coast of the North Island during December/January (mean sea surface temperature = 19.1°C (2020), 20.7°C (2022)). Such a finding indicates that the physiologies of these two seabird species are responding to increased sea surface temperatures, even in a species thought to be more 'warm adapted'. Key now is identifying tipping points where the birds can no longer successfully raise chicks. Time is of the essence as marine heatwaves are increasingly common, thus our study findings are worrying and need to be expanded to include other species.

BRENDEEN DUNPHY, UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND

Mate choice in Kiwi-Nui

Mate choice is a critical decision for reproductive success and fitness, and hence population viability. The MHC (major histocompatibility complex) genes play a pivotal role in the adaptive branch of the immune system. These genes have been associated with health and fitness, offering an opportunity to study avian behavioural ecology, as they may reveal key targets of sexual selection.

Mate selection by MHC genes may also influence certain traits, offering a morphological fingerprint for assessing genetic characteristics in social partners. For example, the MHC genotype is associated with the production of distinctive odours used in individual discrimination; a mechanism thought to act in long-lived species with a strong sense of smell. The unique cryptic morphology of kiwi - lacking conspicuous morphological traits to target for mate choice, and nocturnal habits - suggest they should use senses other than vision for mate selection. Our new research aims to characterise and study MHC genetic diversity and its implications for mate choice in North Island Brown Kiwi or Kiwi-Nui. We will study a wild population using previously collected blood samples and other data collected in the field.

Financial support from the 2022 Birds New Zealand Research Fund will be used to characterise the structure and diversity of the MHC genes using next-generation sequencing techniques. This is essential for researching the role of MHC in Kiwi-Nui mate choice. This research will provide vital information that may help conservation management decisions.

ELIANA RAMOS, DR ISOBEL CASTRO &
DR GILLIAN GIBB, MASSEY UNIVERSITY

Exploring plastic ingestion by Toanui

The 2022 Birds New Zealand Research Fund will fund new research on plastic pollution in Toanui/Flesh-footed Shearwaters. The unique ocean lifestyles of seabirds mean they have enhanced sensory features. Some have acute senses of vision and smell such as petrels and shearwaters, which they use to find their prey. Studies reveal that they can follow the chemical odours of their prey across the ocean to locate a foraging source, and some research suggests that plastics in the ocean emit similar chemical odours. We will explore whether the colours of plastics look similar to the natural colours of seabird prey.

The Toanui/Flesh-footed Shearwater is a native seabird which breeds across New Zealand's North Island including in the Bay of Plenty, Cook Strait and Hauraki Gulf. Recent research in Australia have shown that many of the Toanui on Lord Howe Island are ingesting large numbers of plastic debris.

Recent work by Wildlife Management International Ltd (WMIL) has found many of the Toanui chicks on Ohinau Island regurgitating large pieces of plastic. Many of the plastic items regurgitated by the Toanui range in different colours but perhaps the Toanui is selecting for a certain colour which could resemble their natural prey items. The aims of this research are to identify the incidence of ingestion and main plastic types and colour preferences for Toanui, and to explore if the plastic colour resembles the colour of the Toanui's natural prey items.

ARIEL-MICAH HESWALL, SIMON LAMB & DAN BURGIN

	trawl	surface longline	bottom longline	combined
White-capped Albatross	5890 - 10159	920 - 2690	151 - 936	6961 - 13785
Salvin's Albatross	3890 - 7663	44 - 476	439 - 3222	4373 - 11361
Buller's Albatross	1540 - 3281	1343 - 3243	123 - 1347	1466 - 7871
Titi / Sooty Shearwaters	5316 - 11172	12 - 255	220 - 1499	5548 - 12926
White-chinned Petrels	3986 - 7133	241 - 1974	4647 - 21700	8874 - 30807

Table of estimated total captures of 5 of the most frequently bycaught seabird species in New Zealand. The range is the lower and upper 95% confidence intervals of the mean, to reflect the inaccuracy of estimates (2002-2020). Source: Fisheries New Zealand: <https://protectedspeciescaptures.nz/PSCv6/>

Are we there yet? Seabird bycatch in Aotearoa and beyond

Aotearoa is the seabird capital of the world, with more breeding endemic seabird species, and more threatened seabirds, than anywhere else. The space our seabirds call home is one of the world's largest marine exclusive economic zones (EEZ). It is hugely important to Aotearoa ecologically and economically. Out there in our EEZ, and beyond, where ordinary New Zealanders are not watching, our seabirds and fishing vessels overlap in time and space, and at times seabirds are incidentally caught in fishing gear (bycatch).

In speaking with New Zealanders about seabird bycatch in commercial fisheries, I frequently find the problem is poorly understood. We often underappreciate the ongoing challenge that bycatch presents to seabird conservation in Aotearoa. Working in conservation in Aotearoa we have constant conversations about stoats, rats, possums, and all the other introduced mammals that threaten our wildlife. On the other hand, when I mention my work quantifying and mitigating seabird bycatch in fisheries, most people have no knowledge of this area. I was stopped in my tracks some years ago when a colleague who has over 25 years' experience eradicating introduced mammalian predators told me that they thought seabird bycatch was 'fixed'.

It is easy to see why most folks working in conservation aren't at all aware of the ongoing risk seabird bycatch is for some of our most at-risk bird species. Quite simply, we aren't talking or writing about it. This makes seabird conservation in the fisheries bycatch space strikingly out of step with mainstream conservation in Aotearoa. In the past ten years there has been just one article on seabird bycatch in New Zealand conservation science journals; e.g. NZ Journals of Ecology, Zoology and Ornithology. There has been not a single presentation at the annual New Zealand Bird conferences about seabird bycatch in the same period. And across ten years of University of Otago Wildlife Management student research projects, not a single project examined seabird bycatch. All these reporting outlets are full of work focused on mammalian predators, conservation genetics, and diet studies.

This is despite high levels of bycatch of adult seabirds continuing for seabird species that are in high threat classification categories due to bycatch rates, breeding population decline and/or low survival rates. Many of our most vulnerable seabirds impacted by fisheries bycatch live in remote Subantarctic Islands where they are not threatened by introduced mammalian predators. Because people don't live in those places, nor at sea where they forage, for the most part these species are being left behind relative to many mainland species.

Many seabirds have life history traits that make them highly vulnerable to population declines. These include low fecundity and low productivity, made more vulnerable again by small single populations in one location.

Threat classifications of seabird species caught in NZ commercial fisheries:

Critical: Salvin's, Gibson's & Antipodean albatross

Endangered: Hoiho/Yellow-eyed Penguin

Vulnerable: Southern Royal Albatross, Black Petrel

Declining: White-capped & Buller's albatross

Relict: Grey Petrel & Flesh-footed Shearwater

Naturally uncommon: Westland Petrel

For those that are aware of seabird bycatch occurring, most assume that seabird bycatch means seabirds getting caught on hooks. Although captures on different types of longlining hooks is indeed a significant threat to many of our most vulnerable seabirds (e.g. Antipodean and Gibson's albatrosses, Black Petrels, Flesh-footed Shearwaters), it is trawl fishing that accounted for 75% of all seabird bycatch recorded by government observers on fishing vessels between 2002 and 2020 (surface longline 13%, bottom longline 11%, setnet 1%). While there have been some significant improvements in bycatch rates, many are stubbornly consistent, and high. Particularly worrying are capture rates of some of the mollymawk albatrosses, given their life-history traits and threat classification categories.

Importantly, observed bycatch estimates can be surprisingly – worryingly – inaccurate, for many reasons. These include low observer coverage, observers being limited to where on the vessel they are permitted to record seabird-fishing gear interactions from, and 'cryptic mortality'. Cryptic mortality is the problem that observed captures are solely of seabird corpses brought on board the vessel on the fishing gear, while an unknown proportion of seabirds are killed by fishing gear and not then retained on the gear. Seabird corpses not retained on the gear go uncounted.

By no means is bycatch just occurring in Aotearoa. For many species an unknown but considerable proportion of bycatch is happening in the high seas, or in other nations' waters. As a country we are far, far less able to address this bycatch. We can more readily address what is happening in Aotearoa, and in doing so produce bycatch mitigation methods and equipment that can be used by fishing vessels elsewhere too. Vilifying fishers and the fishing industry for catching seabirds won't help. Indeed, at every annual conference dinner I have been to, fish is on the menu. It isn't illegal to catch seabirds in Aotearoa. It is illegal not to report seabird captures. Some fisheries are legally required to mitigate seabird bycatch, but for other fisheries mitigation is voluntary.

If we are putting a diverse group of bright minds to addressing other bird conservation issues in Aotearoa, seabird bycatch should be no exception. We do have clever folks including many fishers working in the seabird bycatch space. But unlike other countries, we don't have academics, students, or community groups there. In 2017 I wrote a review of seabird bycatch mitigation methods used in New Zealand. A lot of work has been done, but much more is needed.

If the wider conservation community and general public doesn't pay attention to bycatch as the most significant conservation threat to many of our most vulnerable, endemic seabirds, politicians and public servants won't either. Currently the negligible attention to seabird bycatch, and top-down government and industry focus, is inconsistent with bold, community-driven conservation aims like 'Predator Free New Zealand'. We are world leaders in mammalian predator eradication. Can we become world leaders in seabird bycatch prevention?

GRAHAM PARKER, PARKER CONSERVATION
(g.parker@parkerconservation.co.nz)

This article is the text of a presentation given at the 2022 New Zealand Bird Conference in Christchurch.



▣ Catriona's Shelduck painting: Simone Giovanardi.

New giant extinct duck discovered in St Bathans, Otago

A new species of giant extinct duck discovered at St Bathans, Otago, has been described by scientists from Te Papa and Massey and Otago universities. Dr Nic Rawlence of the University of Otago's Department of Zoology helped describe the species, which was identified from a large wing bone found in an eroding creek bank. It has been named Catriona's Shelduck after his late mother, who helped inspire his interest in natural history. He told RNZ, "Catriona's Shelduck from the St Bathans fossil site in Central Otago is about 15 to 19 million years old and we know of about seven ducks that used to live there but Catriona's shelduck is the biggest of them all – about 70cm tall and weighing up to 2kg." He said it would have been about 30% larger than a male Paradise Shelduck.

Te Papa Curator of Vertebrates, Alan Tennyson said, "The discovery further underscores the global importance of St Bathans fossils for understanding the evolution of ducks and their relatives."

A New Species of Large Duck (Aves: Anatidae) from the Miocene of New Zealand, A.D. Tennyson, N. J. Rawlence, S. Giovanardi et al, *Taxonomy* February 2022, 2(1), 136-144.

Post-glacial expansion of Eastern Moa range

Cycles of glacial expansion and contraction throughout the Pleistocene epoch (2.5 million to 11,700 years ago) drove increases and decreases, respectively, in the geographical range and population size of many animal species. Genetic data have revealed that during glacial maxima the distribution of many Eurasian animals was restricted to small refugial areas, from which species expanded to reoccupy parts of their former range as the climate warmed.

It has been suggested that the extinct large, flightless Eastern Moa of Aotearoa New Zealand behaved analogously during glacial maxima, possibly surviving only in a restricted area of lowland habitat in the southern South Island during the Last Glacial Maximum (LGM). However, previous studies have lacked the power and geographical sampling to explicitly test this hypothesis using genetic data.

We analysed 46 ancient mitochondrial genomes from Late Pleistocene and Holocene bones of the Eastern Moa from across their post-LGM distribution. Our results are consistent with a post-LGM increase in the population size and genetic diversity of Eastern Moa. We also demonstrate that genetic diversity was higher in Eastern Moa from the southern extent of their range, supporting the hypothesis that they expanded from a single glacial refugium following the LGM.

Verry, A. J. F.; Mitchell, K. J.; & Rawlence, N. J. (2022); "Genetic evidence for post-glacial expansion from a southern refugium in the eastern moa (*Emeus crassus*)". *Biology Letters*, 11 May 2022, The Royal Society.

Chuck Connors and the Rifleman

One of the more unlikely alternative names for a New Zealand bird in the 5th Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand is 'Chuck Connors' for Rifleman/Tititipounamu. I have yet to see this used in any NZ publication, but it is presented as an alternative name in Vol 5 of *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds* (HANZAB). The US actor Chuck Connors played the lead role of Lucas McCain in the 1958–63 US TV series *The Rifleman*. It is an unlikely moniker for our smallest bird, as he was a 6' 5" (1.96 m) former professional basketball player. Any information on where this name was first used for Tititipounamu is welcomed! (colin.miskelly@tepapa.govt.nz)

COLIN MISKELLY, CHECKLIST COMMITTEE CONVENER



▣ Isabel Castro with kiwi

Professor Isabel Castro elected a Fellow of the IOU

Professor Isabel Castro has been elected as a Fellow of the International Ornithological Union (IOU). NZ currently has six Fellows (Ben Bell, Mick Clout, John Cockrem, Lloyd Davis, Christopher Robertson, Murray Williams), who nominated Prof. Castro for this honour. IOU Fellowships recognise eminent and/or meritorious ornithologists for their contributions to ornithology.

New evolutionary and biogeographical history of penguins

A study which sets out a new evolutionary and biogeographic history of penguins indicates a New Zealand origin for penguins during the late Cretaceous (145 to 66 million years ago) and early Paleocene (66 to 56 mya), with subsequent dispersal and expansion across Antarctica and southern South America.

Published in the journal *Diversity*, co-authors JS Pelegrín (Universidad Santiago de Cali, Colombia) and C Acosta Hospitaleche (Museo de la Plata, Argentina) reviewed and integrated all of the geographical and phylogenetic information available on penguins (Sphenisciformes), together with an exhaustive and updated review of the fossil record. Using the BioGeoBEARS methodology for biogeographic estimation, they reconstructed the biogeographical patterns for the entire group. They found that, "a New Zealand origin for the Sphenisciformes during the late Cretaceous and early Paleocene is indicated, with subsequent dispersal and expansion across Antarctica and southern South America."

They say that during the Eocene [56 to 34 mya] there was a remarkable diversification of species and ecological niches in Antarctica, probably associated with the more temperate climatic conditions in the Southern Hemisphere. They also say that, "During the Oligocene [34 to 23 mya], with the trends towards the freezing of Antarctica and the generalized cooling of the Neogene [23 to 2.58 mya], there was a turnover that led to the survival (in New Zealand) of the ancestors of the crown Sphenisciform lineages. Later these expanded and diversified across the Southern Hemisphere, strongly linked to the climatic and oceanographic processes of the Miocene [23 to 5.33 mya]."

"Finally, it should be noted that the Antarctic recolonization and its hostile climatic conditions occurred in some modern lineages during the Pleistocene [2.58 million to 11,700 years ago], possibly due to exaptations [in which a character previously shaped by natural selection for a particular function is co-opted for a new use] that made possible the repeated dispersion through cold waters during the Cenozoic [66 mya to the present], also allowing the necessary adaptations to live in the tundra during the glaciations."

Evolutionary and biogeographical history of penguins (Sphenisciformes): review of the dispersal patterns and adaptations in a geologic and paleoecological context. Pelegrín, J.S.; Acosta Hospitaleche, C. *Diversity*. March 2022, 14.



▣ Patrolling Pakiri beach, Auckland.

Long-running Beach Patrol Scheme goes digital

The reporting of seabirds found dead on our beaches has considerable scientific value. A unique long-term record of observations collected through Birds New Zealand's Beach Patrol Scheme since the 1940s has helped to establish the identity and to some extent the distribution and numbers of more than 115 seabird species in our coastal seas. Analysis of records of these dead birds, and in some cases examinations of the birds themselves, is an important way of studying their movements.

A new user-friendly design and a new look for the Beach Patrol Scheme was introduced on the Society's website in October, and a new digital submission procedure will enable observers to submit records through the Birds New Zealand website (<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/schemes/beachpatrolscheme/>) from a mobile phone or a home computer. A new revised "Beach Patrol Reporting Form" also replaces the old Beach Patrol cards and sheets that have been used for many years (70 years in the case of cards). The new form can be downloaded from the website and printed out before starting a beach patrol. It sets out the information required and provides advice for submitting observations. Members are asked to use this new form as a basis for submitting their observations through the Birds New Zealand website.

Information about species, numbers, stage of maturity and freshness will continue to be recorded but in order to increase the scientific value of observations most questions will need to be answered; these are called "required fields". New Beach Patrol records cannot be submitted unless all "required fields" are completed. In the past, estimates of bird maturity and the freshness of birds, also plumage contamination from ship oil, were not always submitted leading to many incomplete records. In addition to noting evidence of oil polluted birds, records can also be made of birds caught on fishing lines and birds that have been shot. Observers can upload photographs of dead birds - helpful for confirming or for requesting identification. Please only submit photos if necessary to assist with bird identification; don't provide photos if identification is not in doubt (storage of image files online is costly to the Society).

A beach patrol report should be submitted as a NIL return if no birds are found. It is just as important to know when and where birds are not washing up on beaches, as it is to know when and where they are being found.

The effective but slow and costly process used between 2015 to 2020 to construct the database (scanning the cards/sheets and double-entry of records) has now been discontinued. This approach served an essential purpose for the digitisation of card records that spanned about 65 years of effort by members but has now been superseded.

An historical note

The Birds New Zealand Beach Patrol Scheme formally commenced in 1951, more than 70 years ago. However, the earliest records (diving petrel, gannet, Fluttering shearwater, Little Penguin) came from two Wellington beaches nearly 80 years ago (March 1943) by Mr. H. Secker, who in addition to being a keen natural history observer was also a military officer serving in the NZ Army during World War II. Indeed, it is likely that the first records were made during "beach patrols" by soldiers who regularly made security checks of our beaches.

Making a submission

Beach Patrol submissions can be made at any time; there is no need to accumulate records - so please do submit them soon after each patrol. Short submissions, for example, NIL returns, or records of just one or two species, can easily be made from a mobile phone at a car park, or even on a beach, when a beach patrol comes to an end. A receipt of each submission will be emailed to the primary observer and will include a record of the information that has been provided.

In March 2022, the database comprised nearly 30,000 records; more than 440,000 birds have been counted. The Beach Patrol Scheme is one of the oldest of the long-term research schemes managed by our Society, and is one of the oldest continuously managed biological databases in New Zealand.

Common names are used when submitting Beach Patrol reports because most members are more familiar with them than scientific names. The common names are in the *Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand*, 5th Edition. Checklist Committee (OSNZ). 2022. Ornithological Society of New Zealand Occasional Publication No.1. Refer also to: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/society-publications/checklist/>. When submitting new observations, a drop-down menu will appear on the screen in the "Common name of bird" field (box) when the first two or three letters of a common name are entered, then select the name of the bird. The aim of this approach is to simplify and speed up the submission of records and to eliminate naming errors. A second field requires selection of the corresponding "Species name or category in the pre-2021 database". The purpose of requiring the entry of names in two fields is to link new observations using 2022 common names with the names of birds that were recorded in the database earlier than 2021; many bird species were renamed in the 2022 Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand.

What happens to Beach Patrol observations after submission?

Observations submitted following a beach patrol do not immediately enter the database; all submissions will be reviewed to ensure they are realistic concerning bird identity, locality, numbers and in respect of any comments made, measurements provided and the identification of birds shown in photographs. Each submission will be placed in a "draft folder" until it is reviewed by an adjudicator who will check each record before it is added to the database. The adjudicator might email the submitter in order to clarify matters that appear to be unclear. These essential steps are to ensure that the quality of the database will always be high.

Transition period for recently submitted card records

It is appreciated that many Beach Patrol records have been received since scanning and the double entry of information on cards and sheets ended in 2018. A transition period of a few weeks will provide time for these to be received and entered by the Beach Patrol Convenor but from 1st January 2023 new submissions will only be received through the new online data entry facility.

Members are encouraged to continue to submit Beach Patrol observations

Council hopes that this new approach and design for submitting Beach Patrol observations will encourage members to continue to contribute to this important long-running Birds New Zealand research scheme. It is also hoped that newer and younger members will be encouraged to walk or cycle along beaches and contribute observations in order to continue and extend the Beach Patrol effort that has been made by more than 300 members over the last 70 years.

IAN ARMITAGE, BEACH PATROL CONVENOR & COUNCILLOR

A longer version of this article is posted online: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/New-Look-for-Beach-Patrol-Scheme-and-Online-Submission.pdf>



▣ Speckled Mousebird of Sub-Saharan Africa: Francesco Veronesi, CC-BY-SA 2.0



▣ Moluccan Owlet-Nightjar of eastern Indonesia: Derek Keats, CC-BY-2.0



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Ataturu

Piwauwau/Rock Wren is Bird of the Year 2022

For the first time since the annual Bird of the Year poll was set up in 2005 by Forest and Bird, the Piwauwau/Rock Wren has won the title with the Kea, Kororā/Little Penguin, Chatham Island Black Robin and Rockhopper Penguin the runners up. More than 52,000 people cast their votes in a proportional 'STV' electoral system. Piwauwau campaign manager Stephen Day said the Rock Wren had definitely flown under the radar up until now: "It's a true underbird". The Kororā had the most number one votes but with the single transferable voting system that allows people to cast 5 ranked votes the Piwauwau emerged as the winner.

Piwauwau/Rock Wren thrive with pest control

A Department of Conservation (DOC) monitoring programme which tracks populations of Piwauwau to assess the effects of management has found that their numbers are increasing at the 12 sites (see map above) where introduced predators are regularly suppressed, but are gradually declining where they are not. Each January for the past three years, six field researchers have worked their way north from Fiordland to Nelson. In teams of three they walk or fly into 22 mountain sites and camp in alpine basins to survey over several days. At each site they count Piwauwau along 20 fixed lines (every 250 metres), looking for the small birds as they hop and flit among the boulders and listening for their high-pitched calls. They also survey for Kea while there.

DOC research lead Tristan Rawlence says, "We're seeing good numbers of Piwauwau in areas where we're keeping predators down using 1080 and traps, and they are trending upwards. In contrast, at the 10 sites where there is no predator control, Piwauwau numbers are low, and populations are continuing to decline or have locally disappeared. Overall, there are three times more Piwauwau in predator control areas compared to unmanaged sites."

Piwauwau, which are found only in the South Island, are generally doing better in southern areas and west of the main divide, where there is less pressure from introduced predators compared to the east. In Westland, where podocarp and hardwood forests have fewer introduced predators compared to beech forest, Piwauwau have held out at unmanaged sites but are trending downwards. It's hoped planned predator control operations in some of these areas will in future arrest this decline. Populations in Kahurangi National Park that were affected by the 2019 mega beech mast and resulting stoat plague have rebounded.

Tristan Rawlence says long-term monitoring is important to see how Piwauwau populations respond to different predator control techniques and the effects of climate heating and other environmental factors. Climate heating will allow invasive predators such as rats to better survive in alpine environments. This has the potential to squeeze Piwauwau out of areas such as Kahurangi National Park, which lacks higher mountains where the birds could seek refuge.

Two new extinct birds described

Two new species of extinct bird have been described in the *Journal of Ornithology* from fossil bones found in 16-19 million year-old deposits at St Bathans in central Otago around what was once a giant lake called Lake Manuherikia. One was a wren-like bird named *Zealandornis relictus* which was similar to an African mousebird, but that does not fit into any known group of birds and may represent a previously unknown bird family.

Mousebirds are an order of small, acrobatic songbirds with long tails that are only found in the forests of sub-Saharan Africa. It may have behaved like one of New Zealand's endemic wrens such as the Tītītipounamu/Rifleman and may have been flightless, said Dr Trevor Worthy of Flinders University, Adelaide.

The other was an Owlet-nightjar (*Aegotheles zealandivetus*), a small, owl-like bird species known only from Australasia. This is the second Owlet-nightjar known to have once lived in Aotearoa. The first was a large, flightless species called *Aegotheles novaezealandiae*, which went extinct shortly after humans arrived in Aotearoa, probably due to Kiore/Polynesian Rats eating its eggs.

"We initially thought this new Owlet-nightjar must be the ancestor of the Owlet-nightjar living in New Zealand when humans first arrived, but upon closer inspection it seems to be more similar to Owlet-nightjars living in Papua New Guinea and eastern Indonesia today," said Dr Trevor Worthy. "This suggests the St Bathans Owlet-nightjar or its descendants might actually have died out, and then Owlet-nightjars reintroduced themselves, possibly from New Caledonia, where the closest relative of our more recently extinct Owlet-nightjar lives."

Co-author, Canterbury Museum Senior Curator Natural History Dr Paul Scofield, said more digging is needed to piece together what sort of bird *Zealandornis relictus* was: "So far we have only found one fossil of this bird, a humerus or wing bone. You can learn a lot from a single bone, but it can't give you the full story. Hopefully we turn up more bones of this species in future digs so we can solve a few of the mysteries around it."

"Two new neoavian taxa with contrasting palaeobiogeographical implications from the early Miocene St Bathans Fauna, New Zealand", Worthy, T.H., Scofield, R.P., Salisbury, S.W. et al, *Journal of Ornithology* (April 2022).



Western Weka: Michael Szabo.

Exploring avian viromes in Aotearoa

Our knowledge of the viruses that infect Aotearoa's endemic and introduced bird species is limited with little known about the prevalence of viral transmission between native and introduced birds, and what threats introduced viruses may pose to native species. With support from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2021 this project has started to explore the hitherto undefined virome of Aotearoa's land birds and broaden our knowledge of the diversity of viruses that exist in nature.

We collected cloacal swabs from a range of bird species including North Island Kōkako, Weka, Black Robin and Kākī, with further sampling of other species planned. Total RNA was extracted from all samples and subject to RNA Sequencing. We explored the avian virome of Weka. Using a metatranscriptomic approach, we compared viral abundance and richness between different host age groups. We observed that viral richness increases with host age in Weka. We also discovered multiple novel avian viruses falling across many viral families including the *Hepadnaviridae*, *Picornaviridae* and *Astroviridae*. We also studied 18 Kōkako cloaca swab samples taken from three distinct locations in the northern Pureora Forest Park. Deep RNA sequencing was performed on the samples to reveal the entire virome of the species within each location.

From these data, we identified numerous novel viral sequences spanning 37 viral families, 11 of which were determined to have potential vertebrate hosts. Phylogenetic analysis of three of the 11 viral families containing RNA-dependent RNA polymerase sequences revealed six novel Kōkako cloacal-associated viruses. We also observed overall differences in virome composition among Kōkako viromes sampled from different locations. The results suggest that the Kōkako virome is highly diverse and that the vast majority of viruses discovered in the Kōkako cloacal samples are most likely to be environmental or dietary-related.

JEMMA GEOGHEGAN, UNIVERISTY OF OTAGO

Stress physiology of Grey-Faced Petrels

With support from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2021, I measured Grey-faced Petrel/Ōi chick feather corticosterone (fCORT) and measures of chick quality at Ihumoana Island over four years (2017, 2019-2021). I found that chick stress levels fluctuated among seasons, but variation was not closely tied to ocean conditions. More stressful ocean conditions predicted lighter chicks, but also a decline in fCORT. I also monitored reproduction and measures of quality in adults. Increased fCORT in females and lower feather quality (brightness) in adults predicted reduced breeding success. Stable isotopes measured in chick feathers suggested that parental foraging distance varied annually. Potential increasing foraging distances from the colony seemed to correlate to poor feather quality and show year specific relationships with fCORT. To my knowledge, this is the first study of the relationship between Ōi physiology and measures of ocean conditions, feather quality and stable isotopes. It reveals that, taken together fCORT and feather quality measures offer a promising tool for seabird conservation. It also corroborates literature that found that fCORT should not completely replace other monitoring tools; these tools complement each other.

MAIRA FESSARDI (UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND)

Second NZ Storm Petrel breeding colony?

In 2020, an expedition to the Far North caught and sampled 29 NZ Storm Petrels at sea, over 300km from their only known breeding site on Te Hauturu-o-Toi. We sought to assess whether there were genetic differences between these birds and those previously sampled from the Hauraki Gulf. To test for differences between the Far North (29 blood samples) and Hauraki Gulf (49 blood and 12 feather samples) individuals, we extracted DNA and sequenced it using a reduced representation approach. Our results show no genetic differences between individuals from the Far North and the Hauraki Gulf - on average, two birds from different sampling locations are just as genetically similar as two birds within one sampling site. Although no close relatives were detected in the data, we did see genetic similarities between birds that might indicate half-siblings, grandparent-grandoffspring, or cousins, both within and between sites. This strongly indicates that there are not two genetically distinct and unconnected breeding colonies. We thank Birds New Zealand for its generous support, and acknowledge Ngāti Manuhiri as kaitiaki for Te Hauturu-o-Toi and thank them for their support.

ANNA SANTURE on behalf of team NZSP

Seabird deaths in Auckland

Since January 2018 over 500 seabirds have been brought to BirdCare Aotearoa in Auckland. This project reviewed the cause of death and anatomy of 28 seabirds from over 10 species including Cook's Petrel, Buller's Shearwater and Fairy Prion. Necropsies were performed from January-May 2022 which found head trauma was the most common cause of death followed by internal haemorrhaging, or both. This is consistent with injuries caused due to groundings or collisions with buildings. Many of those examined were fledgling Cook's Petrels. Potentially, these seabirds were disorientated and grounded by light pollution, resulting in fatal physical injuries. Most of them were male, resulting in a sex bias in groundings and/or survival rates. More research is required to identify why this is case and if males have a difference in their sense of vision attributing to a greater chance of attraction and/or disorientation by lights compared to females. Microplastics were also found in some seabirds, potentially from secondary ingestion via prey. We thank the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2021 for its support.

AGUSTINA DOMINGUEZ, LYNN MILLER & ARIEL-MICAH HESWELL

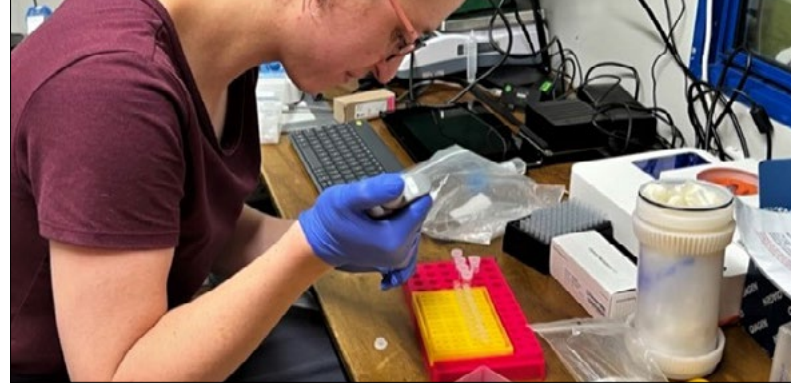
Foraging ecology of three seabirds

With support from the 2021 Birds New Zealand Research Fund, this project is investigating the foraging niches and physiological condition of breeding Fairy Prions/Titi Wainui, Fluttering Shearwaters/Pakahā, and Little Shearwaters/Totorore in the Hauraki Gulf. Identifying their foraging niches during chick-rearing will help us to understand what may drive population-level changes under warming oceanic conditions, which will impact their prey species differently. Assessing condition metrics over several seasons will allow us to determine how the environmental conditions adult birds encounter during their non-breeding period impact on their breeding success the next season. Detecting potential 'carryover effects' of suboptimal environmental conditions and poor foraging will help us understand what physiological thresholds these birds must meet to breed successfully. Due to lab delays, only stable isotope data are presented here. The stress hormone extractions are underway. These data will be analysed and published as part of a doctoral thesis. Stable isotope data from adult blood and chick feathers showed similar patterns of partitioning over the three (Pakahā, Titi Wainui) or two (Totorore) years of study. Pakahā appear to occupy a broader and higher trophic-level niche compared to the other two species. Low N15 values from Totorore were surprising, as observational data, faecal matter, and regurgitates all suggest a more fish-based diet than the other species, which appear to feed more primarily on zooplankton.

EDIN WHITEHEAD



■ Rua the kiwi dog watches on from a distance as Kate McInnes (DOC) prepares to blood sample a kiwi held by Jo Sims.



■ Marissa Le Lec in the lab.

Toxoplasmosis in Little Spotted Kiwi

Toxoplasmosis (*Toxoplasma gondii*) has been reported as a cause of morbidity and mortality in New Zealand's native birds, including kiwi and several cases have occurred in Little Spotted Kiwi (Kiwi Pukupuku) at Zealandia in Wellington in recent years. To better understand the extent of *T. gondii* infection in Little Spotted Kiwi, a prevalence survey of kiwi living inside Zealandia was undertaken. In February 2021 kiwi dogs were used to find kiwi and blood samples collected from 19 kiwi that were used to test for the presence of the parasite (via PCR) and previous exposure to the parasite (via antibody serology).

The results showed that most of the kiwi had been exposed to *T. gondii* and many had active infections. These higher than expected prevalence results suggest widespread exposure of *T. gondii* in this population of Little Spotted Kiwi and, in conjunction with earlier reports of toxoplasmosis causing mortality in kiwi, raise important questions about the effect this parasite may be having on this rare species. These results are particularly interesting given that Zealandia's predator-free status prevents direct contact with cats, the definitive host of *T. gondii*. Further information on the epidemiology of *T. gondii* infections within free-living and managed kiwi populations is urgently needed. This work could not have happened without financial assistance from the Birds New Zealand Project Assistance Fund, for which I am very grateful.

HARRY TAYLOR

Using soil as a probiotic for improving Rowi gut health in hatcheries

In 2020 a research proposal was put forward to study the effects of "wild" soils as a probiotic food additive for captive kiwi which received funds from the Marj Davis Scholarship administered by Birds New Zealand. Due to Covid travel restrictions, the study was switched from North Island Brown Kiwi to the rarer Ōkārīto Brown Kiwi or Rowi. We analysed the microbial content of 350 samples from captive birds at Willowbank Wildlife Reserve and soil and substrate samples from the Ōkārīto region and Willowbank to generate an overview of the microbial community of the Rowi.

Genetic sequencing of bacterial and fungal DNA found in faecal and substrate samples revealed some interesting trends. Captive Rowi that were exposed to "wild", or natal soils in their diet had a significantly altered gut microbial makeup compared to birds in the control cohort. A heavy overlap between the gut microbiome of all captive Rowi and natal soils was observed, suggesting that the microbial makeup of natal soils is already quite similar to the Rowi gut community compared to other soils and substrates they may be exposed to in captivity. Tracking changes in growth rates as the birds aged showed a definitive growth curve typical of kiwi. In terms of growth rates, no significant differences were observed between Rowi exposed to natal soils versus the control cohort. Differences observed in the gut microbiome between treated birds versus controls suggest that introduced "wild" soils can have a significant impact and may provide an avenue for improving the health of captive birds across New Zealand. Further study is required to reliably determine if using natal soils as a food additive has any lasting benefits on the health of captive kiwi returned to the wild.

STEPHEN ROWE MSc, UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Portable genetic sequencing aids fast Kākāpō conservation decision making

We trialled the use of the recent genetic sequencing technology (Oxford Nanopore) in the field with Kākāpō. We first tested and developed the methods in the lab using known sex and parentage samples. Then we took the sequencing set-up out into the field, where Kākāpō were breeding on Whenua Hou. Using it, we were able to determine the sex of 57 Kākāpō chicks which hatched this year, and parentage for 12 chicks for which it was uncertain. These results informed chick veterinary care, prioritisation, and translocations during the 2022 breeding season, and showed that artificial insemination in Kākāpō had a record number of successes this season, producing 8 surviving chicks.

The generous support of the 2021 Birds New Zealand Research Fund allowed us to develop this sequencing methodology, which has the potential to become a standard part of the toolkit for Kākāpō conservation in future. It also has potential to better understand other species, including many of NZ's threatened native bird species. It could also reduce the barrier to obtaining genetic information such as sex or parentage in other species, which could also be very valuable for their conservation.

MARISSA LE LEC, UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO
& KAKAPO RECOVERY PROGRAMME

Seabird restoration in the Waitākere Ranges

Between August 2021 and August 2022, this project, with support from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund 2021, established a monitoring programme for Grey-faced Petrel/Ōi and invasive mammal predators across six colonies in the Waitākere Ranges. Monitoring of Ōi has been intensive, with burrows visited on average fortnightly over the egg laying and chick rearing period (July-Dec) to identify crucial periods for breeding failure. Ongoing predator monitoring is being undertaken in the same areas through tracking tunnels and trail cameras. The relationship between breeding success and relative abundance of predators is predicted to identify threshold levels of predators that will allow for substantial restoration gains.

This information will help to ensure the persistence of Ōi breeding on the mainland and help underpin work on other more vulnerable seabird species. For example, Cook's Petrel, Common Diving Petrel, Flesh-footed Shearwater, and Fluttering Shearwater have been recorded in the Waitākere Ranges but have struggled to establish in the area. Early results have identified varying abundances and composition of invasive species across the colonies, and varying levels of breeding success.

MICHAEL FOX, PhD STUDENT, UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND

Atlas Update Summer 2022

There is still plenty of Atlasing to be done across the country this Summer Atlas season. We would like to encourage more nocturnal effort and increasing the number of grid squares with data. You can use the Atlas Effort Map and the explore tab to target any under-surveyed areas. Key statistics so far are: 80% of grid squares have data (2609/3232); More than 69,000 checklists; 671 Atlasers; More than 26,000 effort hours which equates to 1100 effort hours; and 266 bird species have been seen.



▣ Kārearea are adept hunters, seen here with a Paradise Shelduck: Paul Peychers/NZ Birds Online.

▣ Kororā/Little Penguin: Philip Griffin/NZ Birds Online.

Kārearea can hunt in forest at night

Kārearea or New Zealand Falcons routinely feed on burrow-nesting seabirds at several sites. As petrels are rarely present on the colony surface during daylight, and Kārearea are considered to be diurnal hunters, there has been much speculation about how they are able to capture petrels. A new paper published in *Notornis* in March by Colin Miskelly *et al* presents evidence that Kārearea are able to hunt petrels in forest at night, and to enter burrows during the day to extract chicks from them. The paper describes these as novel hunting behaviours for Kārearea that further increase the broad range of hunting strategies documented for New Zealand Falcons. The authors say that while these hunting methods may be used by only a few individual birds, they can produce high prey-capture rates.

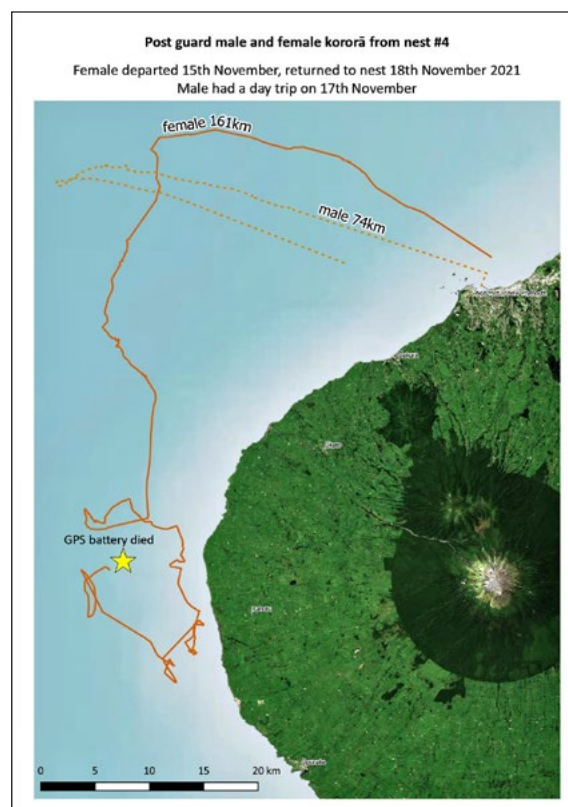
Colin Miskelly and co-authors collected observations of unusual hunting behaviours, including two night attacks on the ground under deep forest canopies. One occurred on Motukōrure, a small island in Lake Hauroko in eastern Fiordland on 4th February 2021, and was captured on a trail camera. A Kārearea was standing on a log nearly two hours before sunrise. An adult Mottled Petrel left its colony and walked downhill in thick undergrowth. “The falcon bounded down a sloping tree trunk towards the petrel, and then attacked it ... below the crest of a low bank ... Flailing wing tips were visible for about three seconds, before the falcon re-appeared,” according to the paper.

Colin Miskelly was on another small island off Anchor Island in Dusky Sound, Fiordland on 25th February 2021 when he disturbed a Kārearea with a freshly killed Mottled Petrel at 4.40am, nearly two hours before sunrise. The kill was not witnessed, but it had clearly happened at night under a dense bush canopy. When disturbed, the Kārearea flew off.

A different attack method was observed by Andre de Graaf on Takapourewa Stephens Island in Marlborough Sounds which contains the world’s largest Fairy Prion colony (1.4 million pairs). During daylight in late December 2013, de Graaf was looking out from the DOC ranger’s house and saw a female Kārearea land nearby and run under a hedge. The falcon emerged moments later with a prion chick. “The adult female returned to the hedge on two further occasions, and each time she was observed entering a prion burrow and disappearing out of sight, before emerging backwards five to ten seconds later dragging a live prion chick with her beak,” according to co-author de Graaf. He also witnessed several similar raids and inspected one of the burrows. “It had a wide entrance leading to multiple prion nest chambers, all of which were beyond the length of his arm.”

These two behaviours have not been previously recorded, so it is possible that individual birds have worked out these hunting styles but not passed them to their offspring, says Colin Miskelly.

Miskelly, C.M.; McLaughlin, L.; de Graaf, A. 2022. *New Zealand falcons hunting petrels at night and underground during the day*. *Notornis* Vol 69(1): 37–44 [March 2022].



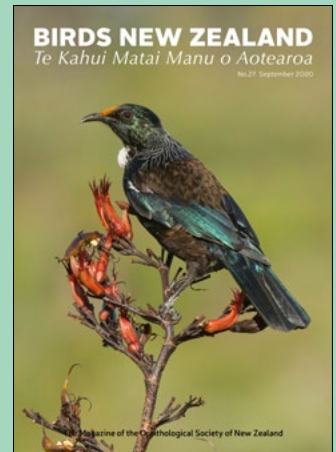
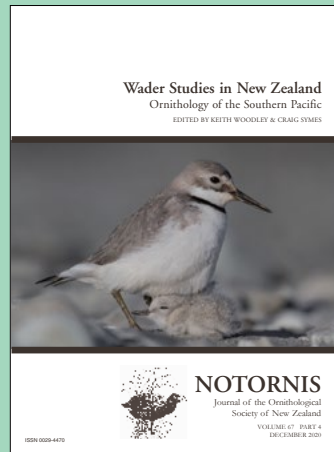
Tracking Little Penguins from Port Taranaki

The smallest of the world’s 19 species of penguin, the Kororā or Little Penguin is classified as ‘At risk - declining’ in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Ngā Motu Marine Reserve Society along with some Taranaki members of Birds New Zealand intensively monitored a colony of Kororā at Port Taranaki during the 2021 breeding season. We developed electronic monitoring methods to provide alerts and video feed when microchipped birds departed from and returned to nests. Using GPS units to monitor the bird routes and dive profiles provided our first understanding of the distance travelled and behaviour of the Taranaki Kororā.

Retrieving the equipment efficiently is vital, as we do not wish to distress the birds and we do not want to lose equipment. With financial support of Birds New Zealand’s 2022 Projects Assistance Fund we now have dedicated GPS units to continue tracking work with the colony in 2022. This year we are deploying RFID readers on the nest entrances to tell us when a penguin arrives or departs, with field and security cameras to confirm the events. We intend to relate the foraging behaviour of the birds to the age of their chicks, and sea conditions such as sea temperature and water turbidity.

ELISE SMITH

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▲ One of the translocated female Black Robins: Enzo M. R. Reyes.

Black Robin translocation success

The Department of Conservation reports that the translocation of ten female Black Robins/Karure/Kākāruia from South East/Hokoreoro/Rangitira to Mangere/Maung' Rē was successfully carried out on 10th September. As of 9th November, nine of the ten translocated females are alive and well, with seven being paired with local males.

Black Robins are currently split between two populations. There are around 270 on Rangitira Island, with the numbers being reported as stable to slowly increasing possibly indicating the approximate carrying capacity of the island. On Mangere Island, the average population over the last two decades has sat around 40, hitting 50 at its peak, but the numbers dropped to about 20 adults in the last few years with a male-biased sex ratio. With the recent decline in the Mangere population, along with the increased risk of having the only other population being near carrying capacity, a high risk of extinction remains.

Tertia Thurley of DOC reports that, "The robins were monitored on Mangere through the last breeding season, and nothing obvious showed up as to why that population is declining. At the beginning of the 2021 season the Mangere population was 25 (eight female, 17 male). All eight females nested, resulting in ten new fledglings (29 eggs were produced and 15 hatched). In March 2022, 15 males, five females and eight fledglings were alive, giving a total population number of 27."

"We don't know why there was a low hatch rate, though this is typical of Black Robins and may be due to inbreeding. It is thought that a Forbes' Parakeet may have destroyed the eggs in one nest, and a starling another. Close observations of the robins did not reveal why the adult females (or males) died over the breeding season. Black Robins live for approximately four years, and these females were all around that age. It is encouraging that eight fledglings were produced, this was more than the previous season."

The translocation was a DOC-led project with support from the Hokotehi Mori Trust, Ngāti Mutunga o Wharekauri Iwi Trust, the local community and the Chatham Islands Conservation Board. Owenga Charters carried the workers and birds between the islands and Kevin Parker of Parker Conservation led the translocation.

World Wetlands Day 2023

World Wetlands Day is celebrated every year on 2nd February to raise global awareness of the value of wetlands. The date marks the 1971 adoption of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in the Iranian city of Ramsar. It has a different theme each year and events are held throughout the country, so check out the DOC website here closer to the time: <https://www.doc.govt.nz/news/events/national-events/world-wetlands-day/>

Hoiho tracking data helps map critical marine habitats

New research on the at-sea distribution of Hoiho/Yellow-eyed Penguins that breed on Rakiura Stewart Island has tracked their movements and behaviour to explore foraging strategies and inform fisheries management. The resulting tracking data have enabled the researchers to build a detailed picture of critical marine habitats for the endangered species.

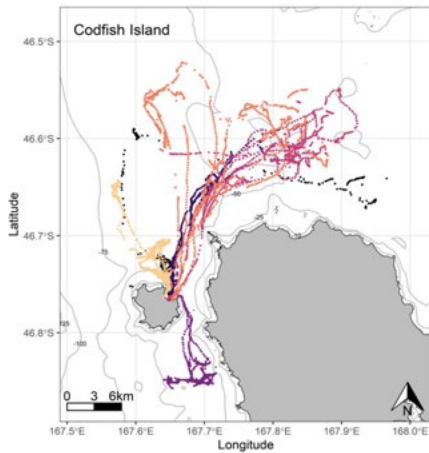
Hoiho have declined circa 72% since 2008/09 within their NZ mainland range. The Rakiura population has declined from an estimated 154 pairs in 2008/2009 to 44 pairs in the 2020/21 breeding season.

University of Otago postgraduate student Thor Elley tracked the foraging behaviour and patterns of 19 adult Hoiho from three Rakiura locations including Port Pegasus, Paterson Inlet, and Whenua Hou/Codfish Island with GPS dive data loggers during the 2020/21 breeding season, recording a total of 25,696 dives across 91 foraging trips. Birds from Port Pegasus reached significantly greater diving depths, spent longer at the seafloor, and performed longer dives. They also had the smallest foraging distribution, with most activity concentrated inshore. Compared to Port Pegasus birds, foraging radii and trip lengths were twice as large for Paterson Inlet, and four times larger at Codfish Island/Whenua Hou.

The study (*Consistent site-specific foraging behaviours of Yellow-eyed Penguins/Hoiho breeding on Stewart Island, NZ*), published in the journal *Biology* (2022, 11[6]), shows that while foraging ranges and trip lengths were substantially different between the sites, the behaviour of Hoiho from the same site were surprisingly predictable and consistent. Thor Elley said the predictability gives a robust estimation of the size and shape of ideal marine protection measures, and shows that managing local fisheries could reduce overlap with where the penguins forage. Rakiura has about a quarter of the mainland Hoiho breeding population, so the death of a single adult could significantly impact population numbers. "Fisheries related mortality can have massive flow on effect during breeding seasons, such that if an adult dies, both dependant chicks usually starve, and the surviving breeding partner will likely skip the next breeding season", he said.

Set-netting restrictions already in place adjacent to the South Island reduce the risk of Hoiho entanglement and death within the four nautical mile exclusion zone, however no restrictions on set-netting are in place for Rakiura and its outlying islands. Thor Elley said set-net effort peaked in summer, coinciding with the Hoiho breeding season. "These fisheries overlap with the preferred foraging locations of Yellow-eyed Penguins and current set-netting practices both within Pegasus Inlet and in the waters along the coast could quite possibly mean local extinction is likely unless we re-think inshore fishing practices."

Co-author and supervisor Professor Phil Seddon said new technology used in the study highlighted its potential for increasing the understanding of species behaviour. "Improved understanding of the foraging range and feeding behaviour of Yellow-eyed Penguins will inform management, marine spatial planning, and other measures that can reduce the risks faced by this iconic living treasure."



Map of Whenua Hou/Codfish Island Hoiho at-sea movements.



Pair of critically endangered Antipodean Albatross. An estimated 2,300 die each year. The main threat is drowning on baited longline hooks set by commercial fishing vessels: Michael Szabo.

Cameras on fishing boats to help protect seabirds

Oceans and Fisheries Minister David Parker has confirmed details of a new nationwide rollout of surveillance cameras on commercial fishing vessels that will be capable of detecting fish being discarded and nets being hauled up. In May, he said that up to 300 inshore fishing vessels out of the 1,500+ NZ commercial fishing fleet will be fitted with surveillance cameras by the end of 2024, providing independent, accurate information about fishing activity and better evidence for future decision-making.

Commercial fishing vessels are one of the main threats to the world's seabirds, and every year threatened seabird species are killed in New Zealand waters as a result of commercial fishing activities 'out of sight, out of mind'. The new surveillance cameras rollout is a key step to stopping it happening. Fishing vessels posing the greatest risk to threatened protected species will get cameras first. "Trawl and set net vessels operating off the West Coast of the North Island will receive the first cameras from August. Those vessels are expected to be transmitting footage to Fisheries New Zealand from 30 November," said the minister.

A study by Australia's Ministry of Agriculture showed the reporting of seabird and marine mammal bycatch was nearly eight times higher on commercial longline fishing vessels after surveillance cameras were installed on them in 2015. The cost for the NZ rollout is estimated to be \$68 million, with the fishing industry required to pay back about \$10 million of that. Surveillance cameras will be fitted to all surface longline vessels, all bottom longline vessels, all commercial fishing vessels over eight metres long that use set nets, and all trawlers up to 32 metres long.

Population assessment of Long Island Pākaha

Seabird translocation is still in its infancy and not much is known about the factors as to why translocated birds may not establish at their new site. Seabirds typically exhibit strong site fidelity, wanting to return to their natal colony to breed. With increasing numbers of seabird species in decline, it became important to determine if seabirds could be translocated and establish at a new site. The Pākaha/Fluttering Shearwater was chosen in 1991 in a flagship project beginning with 334 Pākaha chicks translocated from Kokomohua/Long Island to Te Pakekā/Maud Island in the Marlborough Sounds. Since then, they have been translocated to Mana Island, Matiu/Somes Island and most recently to Wharariki Ecosanctuary at Cape Farewell. With multiple translocations from one source population, it is important to understand their post-translocated movements and whether birds have since returned to their natal Kokomohua/Long Island colony.

Wildlife Management International Ltd, in conjunction with Birds New Zealand in Marlborough, has secured funding on behalf of Birds New Zealand through the Project Assistance Fund to visit Kokomohua/Long Island in October to survey the Pākaha colony focusing on both study burrows and natural burrows. The goal is to locate and identify any previously translocated birds (from all projects) that may have returned to the island. This project will provide multiple training opportunities to Marlborough Birds New Zealand members, including burrow site identification and training in handling and bird-banding techniques. For more information, please contact: keegan@wmi.co.nz

KEEGAN MISKIMMIN



▲ Cattle Egret in flight: Tony Whitehead/NZ Birds Online.



▲ Wetland bird monitoring workshop at Sinclair Wetlands: Bruce McKinlay.

FAR NORTH

Kevin Matthews reports 7 Cattle Egrets arrived at Unahi in late autumn that stayed among stock on nearby paddocks over winter. On 1/9 he counted 153 Cattle Egrets on some previously flooded pasture between Kaitaia and Awanui. Then on 26/9 he saw a large flock in the paddocks at Unahi in which he counted over 160 birds, many of which were in golden-headed breeding plumage. He says that he assumes they had moved north before their journey back across the Tasman to Australia. Only 2 remained when he visited again on 27/10, and he has not seen any there since then. There are still over 250 Royal Spoonbills there, and the local Red-billed Gulls are nesting on boats.

Some of us did a beach patrol of 90 Mile Beach on 29/10 where we counted 940 White-fronted Terns, several of which were seen gifting a fish to another tern, signalling the start of breeding. We also saw 7 Red-billed Gulls, 213 Southern Black-backed Gulls, 7 NZ Dotterels and 33 SIPO. Fernbirds have been heard calling in the gum fields and the part of the Kaimaumu Swamp that did not get burned, and a lone NZ Tomtit was heard in the Herekino Forest. At the end of September over 500 Bar-tailed Godwits were seen on Tokerau Beach, and a lone Kereru was seen near Pukenui, the first seen there for a very long time. Kevin Matthews also reports seeing 3 Little Terns feeding with White-fronted Terns and a White-winged Black Tern at the entrance of Rangaunu Harbour on 5/11.

- ISABELLA GODBERT

NORTHLAND

Our Northland and Far North branches have been making great use of Zoom with two inspiring speakers from outside the region giving recent talks. At our September meeting we had a fantastic talk from Harry Boorman about 'Big Year Birding'. Despite the lockdowns in 2021 he managed to travel the whole country in pursuit of birds, recording a staggering 245 species. In October Tertia Thurley educated us all on the Chatham Island Black Robin. It was fascinating to hear the details of this extraordinary conservation success story.

A Wandering Tattler has arrived, seemingly for another summer at Oceans Beach. This rare migrant species breeds in Siberia,

Alaska and north-west Canada and migrates south to Pacific islands, Australia and occasionally NZ. The latest Backyard Kiwi Count has reported an estimate of 1,130 adult North Island Brown Kiwi out at Whangarei Heads - up from 80 in 2001 - no doubt as a result of many years of Stoat control and great dog control by owners in the Heads community. Members of the Northland branch are now gearing up to spread the birdy word in the community with volunteers ready to take part in the 'Parihaka Bioblitz' and the Library 'Big Day In' - both on the first weekend in November.

Our Ngunguru Estuary summer shorebird survey on 12/11 recorded a new record of 63 Bar-tailed Godwits, and Scott Brooks has reported that recent pelagic trips from Tutukaka out past the Poor Knights Islands to the 'Petrel Station' have included sightings of South Polar Skuas, Mottled Petrels, a Long-tailed Skua, Chatham Albatrosses, and on 13/10 a very rare Stejneger's Petrel.

- ILSE CORKERY

AUCKLAND

Our Ambury Regional Park guided bird walk on 25/9 recorded 3,000 Bar tailed Godwit, 300 Wrybill, 1 Grey-tailed Tattler, 200 Black-billed Gull and 187 Royal Spoonbill. This was followed by our Michael Taylor Memorial guided bird walk in Cornwall Park on 16/10. Highlights for the 25 participants included 2 Kereru in spectacular display flights, numerous Common Pheasants, and CA Quail and Paradise Shelduck families. In co-operation with Community Waitakere, the Te Atatu Marae Coalition, and 2 local schools an unveiling of "The Flock" event was held at Orangihina in Te Atatu on 27/10. The school students were treated to the arrival of 300 godwits and a presentation by Mel Galbraith.

A Whatipu field trip on 21/9 included sightings of 6 Fernbirds and the early call of a Shining Cuckoo. Twenty participants joined our Shakespear Regional Park Survey on 18/9. Unfortunately, only 1 Saddleback was seen. In total 49 species were recorded including 2 Banded Rails, 2 Spotless Crakes, 9 Fernbirds and 357 Tui. A survey for Spotless Crane at Orangihina on 24/9 found 8 Fernbirds and numerous Banded Rail footprints.

Our annual Motutapu Island survey

on 8-9/10 recorded 2 NZ Dabchicks on the Administration Bay pond, a new species record for the island and likely a first record on any Hauraki Gulf island. Also recorded were 1 Shore Plover, 1 Long-tailed Cuckoo, 6 Spotless Crakes, 4 Pateke/Brown Teal and - disappointingly - 3 mallard x pateke hybrids.

A 3/9 Karekare beach patrol recorded 21 birds of 11 species including 1 Buller's Albatross, 2 Grey-faced Petrel, 4 Hutton's Shearwater and 1 peafowl. Another on 1/10 found 7 birds of 5 species including a juvenile Salvin's Albatross and a giant petrel spp. Our patrol of Pakiri Beach on 23/10 found 10 beach wrecked birds of 6 species including 2 Buller's Shearwater and 2 Hutton's Shearwater. Our live bird count there recorded 47 Nth. NZ Dotterels, 65 VOCs and 4 NZ Fairy Terns.

Other local sightings have included a Shore Plover at Orangihina in Te Atatu (6-9/10), a recently released bird from Motutapu Island, and a Whimbrel (9/10). An encouraging record was of 2 adult Pateke with 2 almost fledged ducklings at Michael's Avenue Pond in Ellerslie during October. Pateke were collected from Ellerslie and Remuera in the 1880s as museum specimens, so if successful this event may be the first record of Pateke breeding on the Auckland isthmus in more than 100 years!

- IAN McLEAN

SOUTH AUCKLAND

At our August meeting, Adrian Riegen gave us a fascinating talk about his study of NZ Dotterels breeding on Auckland's west coast. He reports 107 adults and chicks have been flagged there since 2018 in an attempt to find out if birds hatched there also return to breed. About half of the banded chicks have been re-sighted up and down the west coast and also on the east coast, so Adrian would appreciate reports of any other sightings. In September, John Dyer from Fish and Game spoke about Grey Teal and attempts to increase the population. The introduction of breeding boxes in recent years has been very successful. Females are quite site-faithful, and some will lay a second clutch of eggs while the male tends the first clutch of young. Some females will lay their eggs in another's box and leave them to incubate and raise the young. Teal may raise up to 10 young, as was recently reported from a pond at Mangatawhiri.



Our September speaker was unwell, so we had a discussion about NZ Dotterel, particularly those who are now breeding inland due to pressures from dogs, people and vehicles at their more usual beach sites. They favour open areas with pools of water nearby, and they pluck grass to make a small cup to nest on. Inland sites where they have recently been observed include Opaheke (2 chicks banded and now flown, plus another pair with 1 chick remaining from 3 hatched), Ardmore airfield (1 chick and a nest with 2 eggs), and Pavilion Drive near the airport with 1 nest. Pied Stilts are also nesting at several of these sites. Nests were also reported at a new Clark's Beach subdivision, but were destroyed by recent ploughing, and pairs have been seen on reserves at Papakura and Takanini. At the more usual coastal sites, there are nests with 3 eggs at both Big Bay and Wattle Bay. A pair of Banded Dotterel at Port Waikato successfully hatched 2 chicks and all have been banded.

A Banded Rail with 6 chicks was seen at Pahurehure, and 61 Sth Black-backed Gull nests at the Awhitu colony. Arctic migrants have been returning to Pukorokoro Miranda, but reasonable numbers of SIPOs were still leaving for the South Island in mid-September. Two Curlew Sandpipers and 2 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers were regular at Piako and both Whimbrel and Eastern Curlew were seen in late October between Piako and Miranda. Several Red-necked Stints have been reported, and 2 Arctic Skuas were seen chasing birds over the mangroves at Piako. A couple of Brown Teal have also been seen at the Miranda freshwater pools for the second consecutive summer. Shining Cuckoo and Pheasants have been heard at many locations. Ten noisy Kaka were seen flying over bush at Homunga Bay and 1 or 2 NZ Falcons are a regular sight at Mangatāwhiri.

– SUE FROSTICK

WAIKATO

Elizabeth Elliot-Hogg and Dr Emma Williams gave very interesting talks on the capacity of restored urban forests to support native birds and the latest Australasian Bittern research at our August and September meetings, and we discussed Pukorokoro Miranda's recent "Meet the Birds" day at our October meeting. The Hauraki Gulf is generally in a poor state despite some success stories such as with Black Petrel. The Government and the Auckland and Waikato regional authorities are very much on board and it is hoped improvements will soon be made. A Western Brown Kiwi named Tahī was released at Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari, the first of up to 500 to be released as part of the "Kiwis for Kiwi" initiative.

Notable sightings included a pair of NZ Falcons on Pukete Bridge in Hamilton City and a White-faced Heron nest in Bremworth Park. Russell Cannings reports some regular NZ Falcon sightings around urban Morrinsville which may indicate a local pair. Adults have been seen 4 times over the past 4 months and a tame juvenile was found at Lockerbie Park in early October. Neil Fitzgerald also saw a NZ Falcon pass overhead as he charged his electric vehicle in Te Kuiti.

On the Hauraki Plains 21 Cattle Egrets and 1 Glossy Ibis were reported. An informal survey in early October of the Kopuatai peat

swamp on the Hauraki Plains resulted in 4 Australasian Bitterns heard booming, Marsh and Spotless crakes heard, and several Fernbird pairs detected. Redpoll appear to be breeding in the area, and a territorial NZ Pipit was a pleasant surprise, both being quite scarce in Summer in north Waikato.

On the Coromandel the NZ Dotterels have started breeding with the first nests being found mid-August. However, not many chicks are on the ground due to the predation of eggs and chicks. Royal Spoonbills seem to be gearing up for another breeding attempt at the Howard Memorial Wetlands in Te Aroha. Several were present during October with some seen sitting on nest-like structures. Higher water levels there have attracted larger numbers of NZ Scaup and NZ Dabchick, both of which are usually fairly scarce there. Finally, Tim Bernard reported a possible Eastern Barn Owl near Te Poi in late October.

– KEN WEDGWOOD & RUSSELL CANNINGS

BAY OF PLENTY/VOLCANIC PLATEAU

In September we held our first evening meeting since pre-Covid times. Graeme Young updated members on the Rotorua Lakes waterbird counts, focusing on NZ Dabchick. He is also involved with the Kaharoa Kokako Trust and bird work on Mokoia Island. He invited members to help with the 2023 Rotorua Lakes census. His email is: gdy@outlook.co.nz

It has been 10 years since the MV Rena oil spill off the BOP coast and we still have a few Little Penguins from that time circulating in the wild. Four Oi/Grey-faced Petrel chicks have been banded in the study burrows on Mauao so far this year, with the aim of 50+ chicks two years in a row looking feasible. Four NZ Dotterel have attempted to nest on Mount Maunganui Main Beach so far this year. Two chicks from one of the nests have survived the onslaught of beach visitors, so far. An evening field trip/picnic/waterfowl ID walk at Carmichael Wetlands, Bethlehem, is planned for an outdoors end to the year in December.

– PAUL CUMING

GISBORNE

Gisborne members were invited by Rongowhakaata Iwi to mark Conservation Week (5-11/9) at the tidal estuary (Te Wherowhero) to share knowledge of the shorebirds. Five of us joined the Muriwai locals with spotting scopes and binoculars and were rewarded with a generous BBQ lunch. Of note, some 54 Bar-tailed Godwit were counted, 7 Royal Spoonbill and notably a White Heron. The following day we were again invited by Rongowhakaata Iwi to join them on a hikoī to Te Kuri/Young Nicks Head Station Orongo Wetland – a rare treat to access this station, owned by New York businessman and philanthropist John Griffin.

The first report of hearing a Shining Cuckoo in our district was made on 21/9. Two Kaka have been photographed by John Kyngdon (rare sighting for Gisborne) and Spotted Doves are being recorded more frequently with 3 seen together on 27/9. Very wet weather has affected our back country roads and consequently our atlas efforts. Our Atlas coordinator Malcolm Rutherford is planning to use funding from Toi Toi Wines New Zealand to organise an atlasing trip to help gather bird observations for the more remote under-

surveyed areas of Gisborne in February 2023. If you are interested in joining the trip please email him: malcolm.rutherford@gmail.com

– RAEWYNNE FOREMAN

TARANAKI

Halema Jamieson from Taranaki Regional Council spoke at our August meeting on recording bird species of special interest in Taranaki, followed by Biz Bell and Sara Larcombe from WMIL and Danielle Gibas from Wild for Taranaki at our September meeting, who spoke about their project to identify seabirds and coastal birds of Taranaki, their traditional habitats, and what needs to be done to bring them back. Members were asked to delve into their notebooks to provide information for what Biz described as a 10–500 year project. Biz also talked about her 25 years of monitoring Black Petrels at Aotea/Great Barrier Island.

Beach patrols after some severe weather events produced records of Little Penguin, Fluttering and Hutton's shearwater, and White-fronted Tern. Vaughn Turner brought a fresh Cape Petrel for members to inspect.

August's field trip to Balsom Park and Audrey Gale Reserve turned up a variety of species, 1 NZ Dabchick and 2 NZ Scaup on a small pond, and various waterfowl on the Waiwakaiho River. On September's trip to the lower slopes of Mt Taranaki we were accompanied by Rifleman, Grey Warbler, Tui, NZ Tomtit and Kereru, and we had good views of 2 Whio on the Waiwakaiho River.

There have been reliable reports of at least 2 Kaka seen around the city since early July. One lucky member got some lovely photos of 1 in a flowering Kowhai. Hopefully they stay. On 7th October a trio of us went birding on the Global Big Day, starting with a rather frosty overnight at Lake Rotokare. We recorded NI Brown Kiwi, Morepork, Pateke, and NZ Scaup just after midnight. Through the morning the list rapidly increased with a total of 30 species recorded. At the Whanganui River estuary we spotted a variety of shags and terns, and then 1 godwit and 4 Royal Spoonbills on our way to Upokongaro for Nankeen Night Heron. At Mt Taranaki Rifleman and Whio eluded us, as did NZ Dabchick and Australasian Little Grebe at Lake Mangamahoe, but we added CA Quail and Eastern Rosella. We finished at Waiwakaiho River estuary and beach in the early evening with a pair of VOC, the resident breeding NZ Dotterel and a lone gannet at sea. Our grand total was 68 species on a hectic but rewarding day. Planning for next year is underway. A pair of Pacific Golden Plover were back at Waiongana on 15 October with 1 Red Knot and 1 NZ Dotterel.

– PETER FRYER

HAWKE'S BAY

There was a big turn-out of 15 members for our August field trip, which was designed to get some winter Atlas counts done in squares lacking data. We split into 3 groups, with 1 group going to a private farm pond while the other 2 drove public roads and stopped alongside different habitats to do counts. In all, 17 checklists were completed in 4 previously data-deficient squares. Our September field trip was to lakes Tūtira and Waikopiro, with a stop on Pakuratahi Valley Road to see what we could find along the stream next to the road



(there had been reports of potential dotterels). No dotterels, but each of the half-dozen checklists completed included 14+ species. It is always surprising what comes out of the woodwork when you stop for 5 minutes! The highlights of the day were confirmations of the onset of spring: the first Shining Cuckoo of the season, lots of Tūi in blossoming Kowhai, and several broods of cygnets and ducklings.

Interesting sightings have included 6 Bar-tailed Godwits at the Clive River mouth on 14/8, and a Reef Heron and 10 NZ Dotterels at Pandora Pond on the same date. Nineteen Bar-tailed Godwits were seen at The Scrapes on 24/8; this number quickly increased to at least 281 (including at least 77 juveniles) by the end of October. RR Bernie Kelly spoke to and guided c.50 people around The Scrapes at a 'Meet the Godwits' gathering that was jointly organised by the Ahuriri Estuary Protection Society and Birds New Zealand in early October.

Up to 5 Spotted Shags were seen around the old Clive sewage outlet in August. A female Pāteke with 5 ducklings was reported from Te Awanga lagoon at the end of August. All 5 survived to the end of October, when they were effectively indistinguishable from the female and considered fledged. Various tern species (White-fronted, Black-fronted, Little, White-winged Black) continue to be seen along the coast, and a mixed colony of White-fronted Terns and Black-billed Gulls is nesting on boats moored at the Yacht Club in Ahuriri. Two Wrybills were seen at Clive on 27/9; a very unusual place for them to be seen. Lastly, a large flock of 40+ Australia Magpies was seen at the head of the estuary in Bay View, and a Kākā was reported from the Kawekas.

– THALIA SACHTLEBEN

WHANGANUI

With the arrival of Spring, attention shifted from the "Great Kākā Hunt" to the return of annual migrants. Shining Cuckoo was first recorded calling at Papaiti on 1/9, several weeks earlier than normal. This was not an isolated early record as birds were reported calling from several separate localities in subsequent weeks. One observer noted that the species' arrival was about 2 weeks earlier than in previous years. They seem to be more vocal than last year.

The return of northern hemisphere migrants saw the focus shift to the passage of waders and waterbirds through the Whanganui Estuary. Almost daily observations started in early September. Of particular interest was whether AJD, 'our' flagged male Bar-tailed Godwit, would return for his 15th consecutive summer since being banded. Paul Gibson found him at the Manawatū Estuary on 7/10, but he has not yet moved across to the Whanganui Estuary.

The passage of returning adult Bar-tailed Godwits through the estuary during September was light, with 1-3 adult birds present intermittently between early September through to mid-October, when the first juveniles arrived. Several adults had obviously just flown in, judging from their staggered walk and limp wings on arrival. In their weakened state, these solitary individuals were extremely nervous, especially in the presence of Southern Black-backed Gulls. Godwit numbers only increased after the first juvenile godwits arrived, reaching a maximum

of 30 at the end of October. These flocks were more settled and paid little overt attention to overflying gulls—safety in numbers. Most of these birds were also transients.

Among other migrants recorded during the Spring migration were 3 Curlew Sandpiper on 19/9 (a 4th, different, bird was photographed on the Manawatū Estuary on the same day); up to 4 Red Knot (present from mid-October); and pulses of local migrants—SIPO, Wrybill and Royal Spoonbill—passing through during September–October.

Several observers continue to monitor the Nankeen Night Herons at Upokongaro. Currently, there are 6 birds present, with 1 pair apparently incubating eggs in a flimsy, Kererū-like nest. Although several just-fledged birds have been photographed on the Whanganui River in recent years, this is the only known nest since November 1995, when the species was first recorded breeding at Hiruhārama/Jerusalem. Elsewhere, the small Pied Shag colony at Pūtiki, Whanganui, established in 2019, continues to grow. Eight pairs are currently nesting, up from 5 last year.

– PETER FROST

WAIARAPA

Our August outing was to Riversdale Beach and thereabouts. The dotterel situation at Riversdale is very poor. Most of the dune area where Banded Dotterels used to nest has been lost to the combined actions of the river and ocean. Also, it was vulnerable to the very heavy presence of vehicles, dogs and humans. We spotted a couple of Banded Dotterels and a lone NZ Dotterel. Hopefully the dotterels have moved up or down to coast to much more sensible nesting habitat. Since then we have had a 31/10 report that a pair of NZ Dotterels may have nested there!

Walking on the beach we spotted a handful of VOCs, gulls and a solitary Little Shag. We also braved the Private Road sign to visit Orui Beach just north of Riversdale. We saw Caspian Terns, more VOC, White-faced Heron, shags and plenty of Sacred Kingfishers. The reefs seemed ideal for Reef Herons but none were sighted.

In September three of us braved cold drizzly conditions to visit the Tauherenikau Delta and the nearby lagoons. This is a great place for birdwatching with over 30 species recorded on our visit. The highlight was being close to several booming bitterns in the reed beds but they were not sighted. Also seen were NZ Dabchicks, Royal Spoonbills and a host of ducks, shags and the full range of introduced finches. A family of White-faced Herons with three gawky teenage offspring entertained us.

In October we visited Pigeon Bush on the flank of the Remutaka Range above Wairarapa Moana. We were assisting Colin Shore who has done so much to care for this large area of (mostly) regenerating native forest. After the work, we enjoyed a splendid lunch. Our bird list included Tui, Bellbird and many Grey Warblers and NZ Fantails. Rifleman and NZ Tomtits have also been seen there, but not this day.

– OLIVER DRUCE

WELLINGTON

Whanganui-a-tara/Wellington members set out from the harbour on a full day pelagic trip on 6/11, venturing further offshore than previous trips to the 12 nautical mile territorial

limit. Exploration of Nicholson Canyon and then Cook Canyon produced sightings of a total of 17 tubenose seabird species, including 5 species of albatross (Salvin's, White-capped, Northern & Southern Royal, Antipodean). Relatively calm sea conditions allowed for close views of over 100 Salvin's Albatrosses and 50 Westland Petrels on the water at one point, and the day was thoroughly enjoyed by all 20 participants.

The fifth decade of the Pāuatahanui Inlet survey continues, ensuring that members have opportunities to do fieldwork every month that adds to long-term data sets. For those interested in joining this great initiative, please contact Ian Armitage for more information: ian.armitage@xtra.co.nz Next, we will embark on a structured survey of Matiu/Somes Island. A notable recent sighting was an immature Common Tern photographed at Waikanae Sandspit on 5/11.

Finally, our branch has continued its long run of successful hybrid meetings and talks with recent subjects being conservation decision-making for Kuaka/Whenua Hou Diving Petrels (Sept), effects of urban sugar water feeding on native birds (Oct), Argentinian seabird bycatch risk assessments (Nov), and Toroa/Northern Royal Albatross aerial surveys on the Chatham (Nov) provided varied themes for all attendees.

– JOHANNES FISCHER

NELSON

Twenty members attended our 5/9 meeting at Richmond public library where Katherine Chamberlain from Waimārama (Brook) Sanctuary gave a very interesting talk about changes in bird numbers following predator fencing and pest control. Waimārama is a 690-ha ecosanctuary in Nelson which consists of mainly beech and podocarp forest backing onto Mt Richmond Forest Park. Their excluder fence was completed in 2016 and pest control was undertaken in 2017. Re-introduced species include Tieke (SI Saddleback) and Kakariki Karaka (Orange-fronted Kakariki). Natural populations of many other native species already existed there. Katherine also talked about the data on population numbers collected by 5-minute bird counts since 2008, giving excellent information on the changing composition of the sanctuary's birds following predator control.

Peter Gaze also gave a very interesting talk about the Society's Nest Record Scheme. While reporting on a Blackbird nest might not seem like cutting edge science, the data obtained may be very informative. For example, nesting data shows Welcome Swallows are now, on average, nesting 3 weeks earlier than in the 1960s.

The next wader census across Top of the South Island will (provisionally) take place between 27-30 November. There will also be cannon-netting of SIPOs on Rabbit Island on 22/11 led by David Melville and Rob Schuckard. Other projects happening include a spoonbill count. This regional project is now well underway with members planning to send in counts from their designated patch each month. We have about a dozen folk so far, from Puponga in the west to the breeding grounds in the Wairau Lagoons. The plan is to count the number present at high tide, always counting at the same spot each month.



We've heard some exciting news on the Fernbird front. Craig Martin reports a nest is currently in use in the Marahau area. This has allowed us to examine closely and photograph the nest with a view to finding others in the Wakapuaka Sandflats Reserve. We are also planning a day trip in November to Lake Matiri see what may be the only Southern Crested Grebe in our region – and the first presence for many decades.

– PAUL GRIFFITHS

MARLBOROUGH

Over Labour weekend we ran an Atlasing trip to Muzzle Station on the Clarence River to target grid squares in a very under-atlased area. Nine Marlborough members were joined by 2 members from the Nelson Branch and the weather played its part with the Saturday and Sunday being perfectly sunny, still days. Over the course of two and a half days we submitted approximately 350 checklists across 11 different grid squares, 10 of which had no effort for Spring and 2 of them having no effort at all. We recorded 45 different species including, Chukar, NZ Pipit and NZ Falcon. There were good numbers of Black-fronted Terns breeding on the Clarence River as well as Pied Stilts, Banded Dotterels, SIPO and Black Shags.

A pair of Southern Crested Grebes are still present on Lake McRae as well as a Pied Shag and 5 NZ Scaup. Rifleman were present wherever there was sufficient scrub or willows present and Brown Creeper and NZ Tomtit were even picked up in a couple of locations. Bellbirds were abundant and a lone Tui was found in a patch of remnant beech forest at the head of a branch of the Tytler. South Island Robin were not found in the Clarence catchment but were detected in the Douglas Fir plantation along the Blind Saddle road. A stop at Lake Elterwater on the drive back revealed 3 grebe species: Hoary-headed, Sth Crested and NZ Dabchick. An eBird trip report is online here: <https://ebird.org/atlasnz/tripreport/79330>

Elsewhere in Marlborough, there have been some good records of cryptic species lately. A few records of Australasian Bittern have been coming in from members of the public, with 1 at Roses Overflow on the Wairau River and 1 at a trout hatchery near Wairau Valley township. Banded Rail have been active calling at dusk at Beacon's Road Reserve, Shakespeare Bay near Picton and at the head of Mahakipawa Arm. There has also been a report of a Marsh Crane at this location, and at Beacon's Road Reserve. Fernbird have also been seen at Manaroa Road in the Pelorus Sound and at the head of Endeavour Inlet.

– PAT CROWE

CANTERBURY

There have been some interesting wader sightings as the Arctic migrant waders have begun returning. At the Ashley Estuary, a Curlew Sandpiper has been spotted on multiple occasions throughout late October, alongside a good variety of other waders including 2 Ruddy Turnstones, 5 Red Knots, and a Red-necked Stint. At Lake Ellesmere, sightings have included a Pectoral and a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, and a flock of 23 Red-necked Stints. Other notable sightings recently have included Wrybill, with 1,271 being reported from

Kaitorete Spit at the start of September, during their migration. It is interesting that relatively high numbers of them have still been found later into the season at both Lake Ellesmere and Ashley Estuary. At the Ashley Estuary, at least 50 were seen in early October, with at least 25 being seen there late in the month. At Lake Ellesmere, 128 Wrybill were still seen in late October as well. An interesting report was an immature White-winged Black Tern photographed on a wooden wharf with White-fronted Terns at Timaru port on 5/11.

Our recent meetings included 2 fascinating talks by Andrew Crossland, who discussed the breeding of dotterels in NZ compared to in South-East Asia, and Fraser Gurney, who spoke about a marathon pelagic birdwatching trip to the Kermadec Islands. In October, our meeting made use of online Zoom software so Harry Boorman could speak to us about his 2021 'NZ Big Year'. Members could either come along to our usual meeting venue to listen, or join from their own homes if they preferred.

A recent field trip to Kaikoura gave members the chance to visit some of the local birding sites. A highlight was the pelagic trip with Albatross Encounter, which gave everyone the chance to see a good range of albatrosses, shearwaters, and petrels

– ELEANOR GUNBY

OTAGO

Winter finished with snowfall in early October, Spring had arrived, and birds were nesting. Although there was no coordinated effort for the Global Big Day (8/9), 23 observers recorded 74 species in Otago. Monthly Atlas trips focussed on surveying squares with no to little coverage. Thirteen people visited Toko Mouth in August submitting 29 checklists. A Labour weekend trip to Naseby to more remote and less visited squares was a success with 7 people submitting 112 checklists totalling 41 species, thanks to funding from the Atlas Team via Toi Toi Wines. Otago's penultimate Atlas winter coverage finished with 69% of Otago squares having some coverage and 104 species recorded, meanwhile Spring coverage is 83% with 119 species. Our regional recorder gave a timely reminder on maximising trips to more remote squares.

Interesting records included Marsh Crane at Owaka Valley, Mute Swan at Tuakitoto and Waiholo lakes, Chestnut Teal (possible hybrid with Grey Teal) at Sinclair Wetlands, and Sth Crested Grebe at Katiki Reservoir. A Black Stilt at Tarras was recorded for the first time since its 2015 release as a juvenile. There was a Pheasant in Wanaka, Kaka in Roxburgh, and Cape Barren Goose and Brown Creeper at Bendigo. A Buller's Albatross was rescued from Balclutha tip. Wrybill increased to 11 at Warrington and 6 at Cabbage Point, plus a Red Knot. SIPO had chicks in mid-September. Bartailed Godwits arrived earlier than usual with 346 at Blueskin Bay and over 400 at Hoopers Inlet in early September. Meanwhile Shining Cuckoo in Otago remained unreported until 18/9, later than usual.

In September Otago members were active with events: 25 people attended the Botanic Gardens guided walk to learn about identifying birds, with a bonus of finding a Bellbird. A successful wetland bird monitoring hui took place at Sinclair Wetlands, organised by the ORC and Birds New Zealand with DOC

technical support; 20 participants learned about acoustic survey techniques and already some members are deploying monitors and conducting surveys across wetlands; the 6th season of Town Belt 5-minute bird counts started, including a day with 10 students from Otago University Ecology Society (AAPES) and 10 members.

The SI Robins Beyond Orokonui project is in its 6th year with fortnightly trips taking place since late August. Our indoor meetings also had good attendance and recordings of this year's talks have now been uploaded to YouTube: Juvenile godwits by Adrian Riegen:

<https://youtu.be/DgYt3t4KcHs>

Photographing birds by Craig McKenzie:

<https://youtu.be/cnvYKSmOUYY>

Seabird Identification by Oscar Thomas:

<https://youtu.be/hq9dz87NNsE>

Torea on the Move by Anne Schlesselmann:

<https://youtu.be/IYkGK4rSzv0>

Seabird Conservation research, Ursula

Ellenberg: <https://youtu.be/IUbkhAc0FmE>

Ancient NZ Birds by Nic Rawlence:

<https://youtu.be/22OqGp4ukNo>

Chatham Island Wildlife by Ela Hunt:

<https://youtu.be/-KvbdESNjJo>

– FRANCESCA CUNNINGHAME

SOUTHLAND

Due to access issues in November for our planned Spring wader count at Jocks Roost, Pete McClelland organised a count in late October. He was surprised to find a flock of circa 3,300 godwits. We know from historical information that godwits traditionally flew into the deer farm paddocks each September from points further north. What we don't know is how many of these birds then disperse to other roosts around Southland. We propose to do another count possibly from a boat adjacent to Jocks Roost while conducting counts in the neighbouring New River estuary shellbanks and other roosts at the same time. Pete also managed to spot 2 Whimbrel and an Eastern Curlew at the same roost, they were also standing close to each other which gave excellent comparisons between the two species.

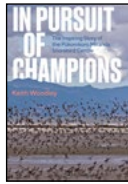
Our female Northern Pintail that had visited last October returned to the Sutton Lagoon on 27/9 spotted by who else but Sean Jacques, this time with a Mallard/Grey drake as a companion. There were reports of them courting so it will be interesting to see if any mating occurred and if so what the outcome will be.

Matt Jones found a 'mega' rarity on Rakiura/Stewart Island on 19/10 when he spotted a Pallid Cuckoo on the golf course at Ringa Ringa. It looks like a first for Southland and Rakiura. He also reported a Canada Goose from the same area, only the second on the island that we are aware of. Other sightings have included 2 Greater Sand Plovers (1 still in breeding plumage) seen on 11/08 and still at Awarua Bay in October. Our very long staying Terek Sandpiper was also seen and latest reports advise it is still at the bay. Early reports of Shining Cuckoos seem to have all come from Rakiura with 12/9 looking most likely the first heard. Finally, the Marsh Sandpiper is back at Sutton Lagoon, seen on 29/10 flying from the New River Estuary, and Sean Jacques found a White-winged Black Tern in non-breeding plumage just north of Waituna lagoon on 12/11.

– PHIL RHODES

Book Reviews

In Search of Champions Keith Woodley PMNT & Sherlock-Co RRP \$40



This fascinating and eclectic 23 x 15cm soft cover history weaves together many strands to chronicle the achievements of the Pūkorokoro Miranda Naturalists Trust (PMNT) and its Shorebird Centre, and their work to protect the migratory shorebirds of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. Written by long-serving centre manager and Birds New Zealand Councillor Keith Woodley, it deftly combines oral history with personal memoir and travelogue.

The story of the amazing shorebirds of the Firth of Thames/Tikapa Moana-o-Hauraki is also recounted in the book's 352 pages alongside that of the very many people and organisations involved in the development of the Trust, including OSNZ and various ornithological luminaries from around New Zealand and the UK.

The text is divided into four sections and 31 chapters that include descriptions of the key people involved, the genesis of the Trust and the Centre, the author's own travelogues from along the flyway recounting ornithological 'adventures' in China, North Korea and Alaska, the incorporation of Pūkorokoro into the Trust's name, the Trust's public education work and field courses, and much more. The author's own absorbing story runs through and binds much of that narrative together, including his outstanding bird paintings. It is also generously illustrated with black-and-white reproductions of photographs that lend a documentary feel.

The idea of a Trust dedicated to protecting the Pūkorokoro Miranda coast was the brain child of a core of keen ornithologists and birders from within the Auckland OSNZ community and King's College Bird Club, including Dick Sibson, Ronald Lockley, Ross McKenzie and former Birds New Zealand President David Lawrie. In addition to the impressive scale of the work undertaken by the Trust's office holders, reserve manager and guides, and many volunteers, there is acknowledgement of the important role played by various women in the Trust's work, such as Sylvia Reed, Beth Brown, Anthea Goodwin, and Gillian Vaughan, and the vital importance of the Trust's positive relationship with Ngāti Pāoa and the local community.

The third section contains a detailed account of the work of the Trust's representatives and the NZ Department of Conservation on the Korean Peninsula and engagement with the Chinese authorities in the years prior to a UNESCO World Heritage Site listing for "Migratory Bird Sanctuaries along the Coast of Yellow Sea-Bohai Gulf of China" in 2019.

This is a comprehensive account that should be of interest to anyone who has visited Pūkorokoro Miranda and marvelled at the spectacle of huge flocks of migrant waders there. It is also a superb addition to New Zealand's ornithological literature. It can be ordered here: <https://bookreps.co.nz/products/in-pursuit-of-champions>

Tiaki Jean Donaldson Potton & Burton RRP \$29.99



This stylish 23 x 18cm soft cover book by first-time author Jean Donaldson is aimed at intermediate-aged children and teens. Over its 80 pages it shines a vibrant spotlight on some of our lesser-known endemic creatures, including a handful of threatened 'underbirds' (Wrybill/Ngutu Pare, Rock Wren/Piwauwau, Orange-fronted Parakeet, Hutton's Shearwater, Black-billed Gull), alongside a menagerie of lesser-known threatened species plus paintings of Huia, Snipe, and Māui Dolphin. The brief texts tell their stories of endangerment and describe their lives, accompanied by skilfully produced digital paintings with an interesting impressionistic quality combined with a sharp photo-realism. Detailed black-and-white drawings also jump off the page. It seems auspicious that these 'underbirds' now feature in a book of their own, especially after the recent election of the Piwauwau as 'Bird of the Year 2022'.

Swarovski CL Curio 7x21 RRP \$1190

The first thing I noticed about these compact and stylish folding binoculars is that they feel like a precision-made Swiss watch – except of course that they're bigger at 9.5cm x 4.5cm and heavier at 250g! Their handy portability means you can carry them in your pocket, so if a falcon zooms into view you could whip them out in short order. Handling them, I found the focus wheel was smooth and the eye cups continuously adjustable with no click-stops, so they can be set to suit your eyes and the viewing circumstances. They felt quite small in my large hands but I got used to that surprisingly quickly. Interestingly, this model comes in both black and burnt orange.



I field tested them at Otari-Wilton's Bush Reserve where I heard a falcon calling. Scanning across the valley I saw the bird about a kilometre away flying just over the forest, before it circled up and I lost sight of it high in the sky. The image of the bird was incredibly sharp with no false colouring around it. The views were also pin sharp in the forest when I watched a Kaka climbing up a rata vine and I noticed their excellent light-gathering as the Kaka circled in and out of shadow.

Next I tested them on a Cook Strait pelagic trip but I wasn't ready for how impressive they were on the open sea. Even with quite distant views of small prions and shearwaters the image of the bird was very sharp. The field of view is 135m at 1000m but it seemed wider thanks to the sharpness of the image right to the edge. Being so compact and unobtrusive, I was also able to carry my DSLR camera with zoom lens without feeling cluttered. Then from the harbour ferry I was also able to identify a small flock of Fluttering Shearwaters in flight about 150m away in high winds. The close focus is 2.5m so I had excellent views of a pair of Rifleman inside an Eastbourne beech forest at close range, as well as being able to see the details of the life-sized 'Haast's Eagle' hanging from the ceiling in Te Papa's Te Taiao exhibition.

Overall, this is an excellent, versatile pair of small pocket-sized binoculars that offer a very sharp optical range from close-up to well over a kilometre away. As always, try them for yourself at a local stockist before making a decision.

New Zealand Falcon Dave Bell The Copy Press RRP: \$30

This comprehensive soft cover 15.5cm x 22.4cm book about our only endemic raptor should appeal to those interested in the Kārearea. Written in the style of a monograph, the authors have crammed in a wealth of bite-sized information on all aspects of this species' life-cycle. The first section is a natural history of the species.



The second presents the results of a 15-year NZ Falcon Survey by the author and Dr Rich Seaton between 2005 and 2021, with useful graphics summarising its range, presence/absence, and where breeding has been recorded. The third covers five 'Special Features' including various geographic locations, juvenile falcons, and White-faced Heron as a prey item.

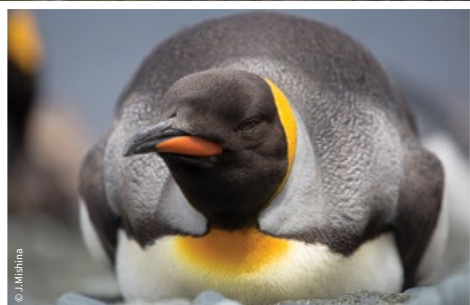
Across 152 pages there are 99 colour photos and six maps. Most of the photos are quite good, but a few are rather distant. A few of the full page photos would have probably reproduced better at a smaller size, and a few are slightly dark. All the same, this is still a fascinating account of our most mercurial endemic bird. It can be ordered here:

<https://www.copypress.co.nz/shop/new-zealand-falcon/>

MICHAEL SZABO, EDITOR



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