

Moult Recording Scheme Report 2022

One of the goals of collecting and maintaining data on moult is to provide researchers with information needed to explore questions related to avian natural history. This season I am happy to report that our first scientific paper using data from the moult recording scheme has been submitted to *Notornis*, the ornithological journal of Birds New Zealand. The paper, led by University of Cape Town PhD student Tanya Scott, describes the timing and extent of Silvereye primary moult and compares the results to other species in the genus *Zosterops*. Several other researchers from both Aotearoa and abroad also reached out to the moult scheme in 2022 with requests for data — a hopeful indication of more publications to come with the support of the moult recording scheme! As I've stated before, I see these collaborations as crucial to our understanding of the evolution of moult and its underlying mechanism as well as highlighting the unique natural history of birds of New Zealand. We'd be especially keen to have Society members and researchers within New Zealand benefit from our growing dataset. If you are interested please get in touch with me via email at: moult.record@birdsnz.org.nz

Another important objective of the moult scheme is public outreach. This season I spoke with Predator Free New Zealand to prepare an educational blog informing the public about the critical stage of moult in the avian life cycle and how humans can help birds during this vulnerable time. You can read the full article here: <https://predatorfreenz.org/stories/things-you-should-know/moulting-season/>. In addition, I've been teaching local banders in the Rotorua area about how to use moult as a tool for aging birds in the hand. I am looking for opportunities to put on workshops this coming year, particularly in the Bay of Plenty region, so please contact me to organize.

Overall, only a handful of moult records were sent to the scheme this season including several species represented by <10 records (White-faced Storm Petrel, Pied Shag, Long-tailed Cuckoo, and Eastern Rosella). While a low number of records may sound disappointing, it's not surprising, given that submission of moult data directly into the FALCON banding system is now possible. Moving forward, the scheme will need to work more closely with The Banding Office at DOC to gain regular access and migration of the moult data into our existing database. In addition, I hope to cultivate stronger relationships between schemes with overlapping interests, such as Birds NZ beach patrol. I would be keen to converse with others about how we might revitalize these relationships to keep those moult records coming.

I'd like to end by reminding readers that anyone can contribute to our moult scheme. This includes information on both moulting and non-moulting birds, whether alive or dead, captive or wild. Forms used for recording moult data can be downloaded from the website (<http://osnz.org.nz/moult-recording-scheme>) or, alternatively, by contacting me directly.

Looking forward to receiving your moult records,

Micah Scholer

Moult Recording Scheme Convener