

Records Appraisal Committee annual report for 2022

Prepared for Birds New Zealand Council for consideration at the 2023 AGM

RAC membership

Current membership is

- Colin Miskelly (Convener)
- Andrew Crossland
- Ian Saville
- Ian Southey
- Alan Tennyson

Elizabeth (Biz) Bell is the RAC Secretary, and continues to provide timely and efficient administrative support to the committee and submitters. Paul Sagar is a co-opted member of the committee, and provides independent assessment of Unusual Bird Reports (UBRs) submitted by RAC members. This occurred 8 times in 2022.

RAC processes

The online UBR reporting system continues to be the main source of UBRs received. This was migrated to the society's new website late in 2022, and apart from a few temporary glitches affecting admin access, has worked well since.

Receipt of UBRs is acknowledged promptly by the Secretary. Batches of UBRs are sent to the committee members every 2 months, and they then have 2 months to provide comment. All RAC members reliably kept within deadlines during 2022. Response letters were typically sent out 3-5 months after UBRs were received.

UBRs assessed in 2022

A total of 123 UBRs was received in 2022, and assessed between March 2022 and February 2023. This is the second largest number of submissions received by the committee in a single year (124 were received in 2018). Of these 123 UBRs, 109 (89%) were accepted by the committee. Three new species were added to the New Zealand list (black tern, black-naped tern, and Matsudaira's storm petrel).

UBR database

The online database of Unusual Bird Reports was also moved to the society's new website in 2022, and now has a new URL (<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/rare-birds/>). The database and the systems supporting have worked well since this transition. The database provides almost immediate feedback on UBR submissions and decisions*, as well as a searchable database of all submissions and decisions dating back to the 1960s. It includes hyperlinks to publications referring to individual UBRs, and to New Zealand Birds Online species pages.

*Updates to the database are made manually by the RAC Secretary or Convener, and so there is typically a delay of a few days between a submission being received or decision being made, and this change appearing on the database. With decisions, this delay is deliberate, to allow time for submitters to receive their personal decision letters before the information is made public.

Publication of RAC decisions

A paper reporting on the 210 RAC decisions from 2021–22 has been accepted for publication in *Notornis*, and should be published later this year (2023).

I thank Biz, Paul and my fellow committee members for their efficient support during 2022.

Colin Miskelly, Convener