

# TŌREA PANGO



## NELSON BRANCH BIRDS NZ. NEWSLETTER ISSUE 7. April/May 2023

### Editor's note

Well, this is a big and slightly chaotic newsletter. -22 pages, reflecting diverse birding interests, lots happening and plenty of opportunities to get involved. Thanks heaps to all contributors.

Having viewed a couple of recent newsletters from other regions, I have been feeling a bit of 'newsletter shame' (-presentation definitely not content) and so I invested in a copy of Microsoft Publisher. Full of bravado I promised at the April meeting that this edition would be a slick and glossy production, possibly rivalling Vanity Fair. Obviously, that hasn't happened. The problem is that Publisher has too many choices and I have little eye for design and layout. So please- if there is someone out there who could navigate me through using this program and help get a basic framework for the newsletter, I would love an hour or so of your time. If it helps-my wife makes a very good flat white--

**SUMMARY OF LAST MEETINGS** – There are three this time as the March meeting just escaped the Feb /March newsletter--- Attendance at all 3 has continued to be high.

### March 7th

- Paul Fisher gave an update on the fernbirds project. There is some concern around the impact of last year's floods on the population.
- Paul G and Rebecca Bowater reported of trip to Motueka Spit with videos and photos. See 'Motueka sandspit pictures' below.
- Paul G gave a report from the Regional Reps Meeting held on the 26th Feb.
- There was some general discussion and reports of recent sightings
- And then -The **AGM**, which was short and remarkably painless with the appointment of the following persons:

Regional Rep - Paul Griffiths [pgmedia2@gmail.com](mailto:pgmedia2@gmail.com))

Treasurer - Paul Fisher [wildlands.nelson@gmail.com](mailto:wildlands.nelson@gmail.com)

Committee Member 1 - David Melville [david.melville@xtra.co.nz](mailto:david.melville@xtra.co.nz)

Committee Member 2 - Kathryn Richards [kathrynjeanrichards@gmail.com](mailto:kathrynjeanrichards@gmail.com)

Committee Member 3 - Sharen Graham [grahamsharen@gmail.com](mailto:grahamsharen@gmail.com))

Newsletter Editor - Paul Bennett [thebraveryofbeingoutofrange@gmail.com](mailto:thebraveryofbeingoutofrange@gmail.com)

## April 3rd

- Kevin Parker, wildlife and reintroduction specialist, gave an excellent talk on the history, management and translocation of the Chatham Island robin/karure/kakaruaia to Rangihau (Pitt Island).
- Paul Bennett gave a somewhat depressing summary of a birding trip to Ghana.
- Paul Fisher updated the fernbird project.
- Members sightings.

## May 1<sup>st</sup>

- David Melville gave a talk on the Bell Island shell bank project. (See below)
- Robin Toy gave an update on the NZ bird Atlas project.
- Wow! -Surprise guest appearance -The director of the Percy Fitzpatrick institute of African Ornithology at Cape Town University (Suzie Cunningham) flew all the way over to give a wonderful talk to our meeting ---well and to visit her mum. Many thanks for a really interesting talk -see below.
- David Melville talked about a possible wood duck project. (see below)
- Members sightings including the Great Crested Grebe and the hardhead. (see below)

## LATEST SIGHTINGS

- **Hardhead**, Wakapuaka Settling Ponds, Nelson This was first reported by 'wazzagonewild' (who else?) on Mon Apr 24, 2023 7:33 pm  
'Stoked to find a male **HARDHEAD** (white-eyed duck, *karakahia*, *Aythya australis*) at the Wakapuaka Settling Ponds near Nelson at approximately 4:30 pm this evening.  
*First noticed due to the obvious white undertail. Medium size (larger than scaup, smaller than mallards) with rufous brown plumage over most of body. Pale eye and broad pale tip to dark bill were other characters used for identification. It was loosely associating with a small number of mallards/hybrids and shovelers at the western end of the southernmost pond.'*  
Since then, it has been sighted by several members.



Hardhead were apparently a breeding bird here and had the Māori name of *karakahia*. In recent times it is a rare vagrant.

- A **Great Crested Grebe** has been seen at Wakapuaka. Last seen in Tasman in the late 60's!! They are moving in!

## **TWO GREAT OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVOLVEMENT!!** David Melville

As stated above at the May meeting, **David Melville** spoke about two projects that would give members a great opportunity to get involved in practical local activity that could really make a difference. These are summarised below: many thanks David for initiating these. A busy boy!

### 1. **Bell Island Shell bank – coastal peppergrass and Caspian terns**



Coastal Peppergrass *Lepidium banksii* is a critically endangered endemic plant – in 2004 there were just 188 plants in the wild, of which only 12 were the result of natural recruitment – the majority being planted. DOC is hoping to establish peppergrass on the Bell Island Shellbank, Waimea Inlet which is also home to a nationally important colony of Caspian Terns.



Willie Cook started banding the terns in 1995, initially with colour bands indicating year cohorts, and since 2011 with engraved bands that allow individual identification. Most distant sightings of marked birds have come from the west coast of the North Island, with a few travelling as far north as Auckland, but most seen around Waikanae and Manawatu. Quite a few of the adults breeding at Bell Island in recent years have been banded as chicks at the colony demonstrating local recruitment [they first breed when 3-4 years old] – it is notable that there are no records of birds marked at Bell Island having recruited to other colonies anywhere in the country.

In late April 2023 DOC contractors sprayed areas of exotic vegetation (fescue, ice plant, fleabane etc) on the Bell Island Shellbank, the aim being to open up areas where native plants, including peppergrass can be established in future. Follow up spraying will be done in late May/early June and August 2023, and then again in February 2024.

Priority	Species	Goal	Status 2023	Action	Control schedule
1 – Habitat transformer species	Tall fescue	Zero density	High density	Control infestation areas, apart from an iceplant buffer strip on erosion prone Eastern side of island. This will require herbicide control and follow up control over several months, and then targeted control for new growth in spring and through summer 2024. After this intensive control, ongoing surveillance to locate and control new plants will be required. Once very low density is achieved, revegetation can begin.	April 2023 – initial knockdown May 2023 – follow up on initial knockdown August 2023 – Spring regrowth control February 2024 – follow up to regrowth control April 2024 – follow up as required  Ongoing control would then be scheduled in August and February, with an additional autumn follow-up control being undertaken as required.
	Iceplant	Zero density	Moderate density		
	Jellybean Iceplant	Eradication	Low density		
	Gorse	Zero density	Low density		
	Marram	Zero density	Moderate density		

Caspian Terns start laying in late September and the duration of the breeding season depends largely on whether nests get washed out on big tides – birds will often re-lay repeat clutches early in the season. Sometimes chicks fledge in December, sometimes not until late January.

We do not know how Caspian Terns (and other bird species) will respond to the vegetation management that DOC is undertaking on behalf of the peppergrass.

Birds NZ is working with DOC to monitor the birds of Bell Island Shell bank and we initiate a programme of regular visits starting in late July/early August 2023 before the start of the tern nesting season.

Details are still being worked out but we will try to visit every ~2 weeks to count numbers of Caspian Terns and try to identify marked individuals. Access to the site is through a locked gate and so we will have to be in a group. I envision that visits will probably last 2-4 hours and I will aim for weekend visits so that as many people as possible can participate – timing of this project is less dependent on tidal conditions than our wader work.

The provisional dates are as follows [please note that these may change]

30 July 1316h 1.3m

13 August 1344h 1.5m

27 August 1142h 1.5m

17 September 1655h 0.7m

30 September 1712h 0.3m

14 October 1628h 0.9m



28 October 1608h 0.5m  
11 November 1521h 1.1m  
25 November 1459h 0.9m  
10 December 1442h 1.3m  
23 December 1339h 1.3m  
13 January 1804h 0.6m  
27 January 1754h 0.9m

Anyone interested in assisting with this project please contact David Melville:  
[david.melville@xtra.co.nz](mailto:david.melville@xtra.co.nz)



## 2. Wood ducks looking for a home

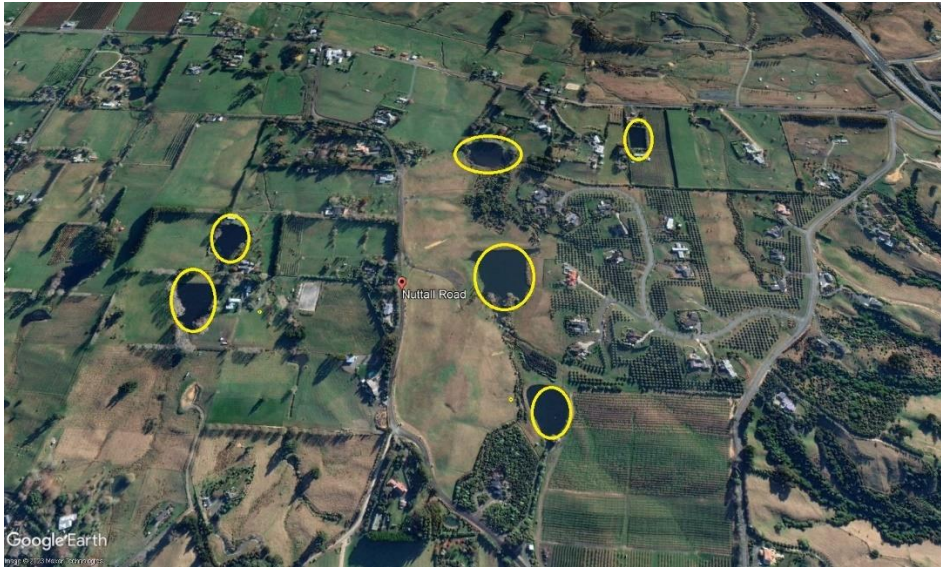
Australian Wood Ducks were first recorded nesting in New Zealand in 2015 (see [https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Cook\\_et\\_al.\\_2016.pdf](https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Cook_et_al._2016.pdf)).

Breeding has occurred every year since but it appears that the population has stabilised at about 25 birds.

Wood Ducks are principally grass grazers,



- and there would seem to be no shortage of suitable feeding habitat amongst the life-style blocks around Waimea Inlet.



Similarly, there are many waterbodies (irrigation ponds, storm water retention ponds etc.) in the district, but what appears to be in short supply are old trees with suitable rot holes for Wood Ducks to nest in.



Is it a shortage of potential nest sites that is holding back an expansion of the population?

We plan to test this by placing nest boxes in suitable locations and monitoring use by Wood Ducks. One nest box has already had two broods of duckling so the outlook is promising.

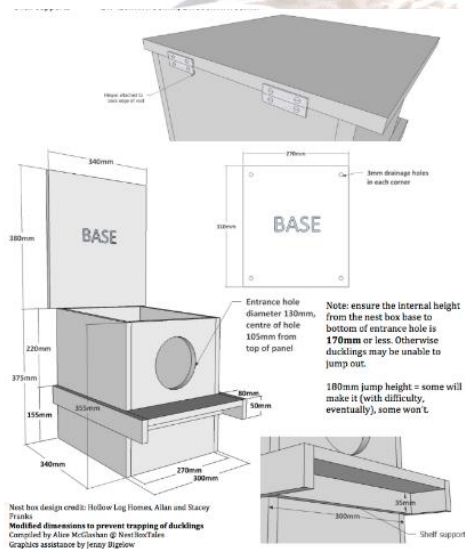




However, another factor that may be holding the population in check is a lack of genetic diversity – we do not know how many birds were the founder breeding population – if it was a single pair then in-breeding may be a problem.

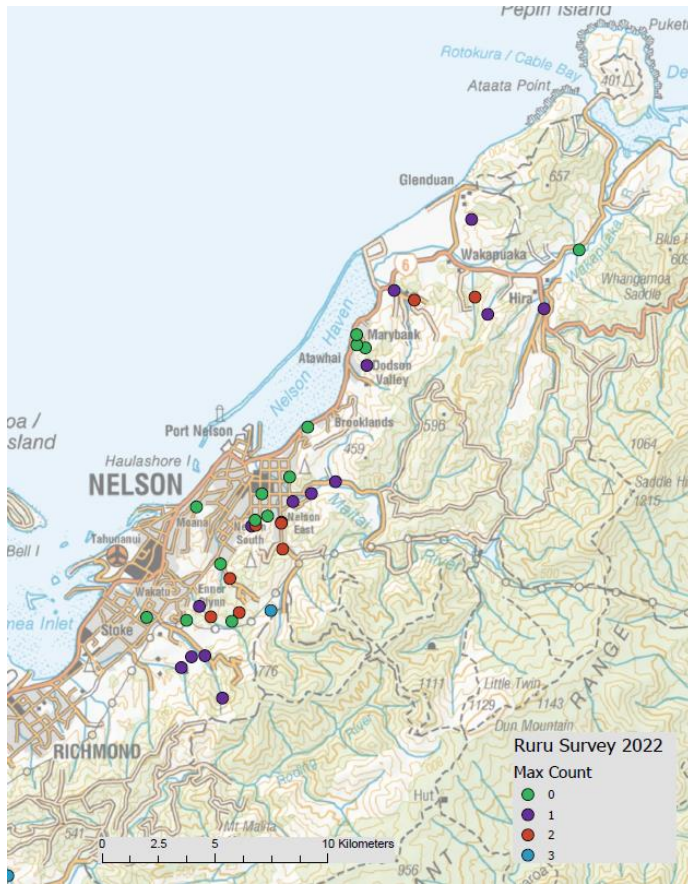
We have a promising start to the nest box project with two members planning to install boxes in the Waimea Inlet hinterland. We will see how these boxes are/are not used before considering a bigger roll out of the project for the 2024 season.

Anyone interested in helping with this project please contact David Melville:  
[david.melville@xtra.co.nz](mailto:david.melville@xtra.co.nz)



**A REMINDER:** If you have not yet registered for the 2023 NZ Bird Conference - Registration closes on 26 May! Details and online registration are available at [birdsnz.org.nz/nz-bird-conference/](http://birdsnz.org.nz/nz-bird-conference/).

## **RURU SURVEY** Peter Gaze



Phil Cochrane Environmental Programmes Adviser for Nelson city Council has forwarded a preliminary map showing the results of the 2022 Ruru Survey. 39 sites and 37 recorded individuals are in the survey.

## **SNIPPETS FROM SOUTH AFRICA**

Suzie Cunningham -Director of the Fitzpatrick Institute of African Ornithology based in Cape town University - dropped into our May meeting fresh off the plane to transport us into an exotic and exciting world of African birds. Suzie is based in Scarborough, a coastal village about as different from its English namesake as it is possible to get.



Pics of Scarborough - A coastal area with a very high level of endemism. The two corvids are white-necked ravens

Suzie showed photos of several bird species found in the area including the cape grassbird below.





Cape grassbird. This species lives in habitat that parallels that of our own fernbird. The similar adaptive morphology of the two species is obvious. A great example of convergent evolution.



And for a spot of bling how about this orange breasted sunbird? - another regional endemic.

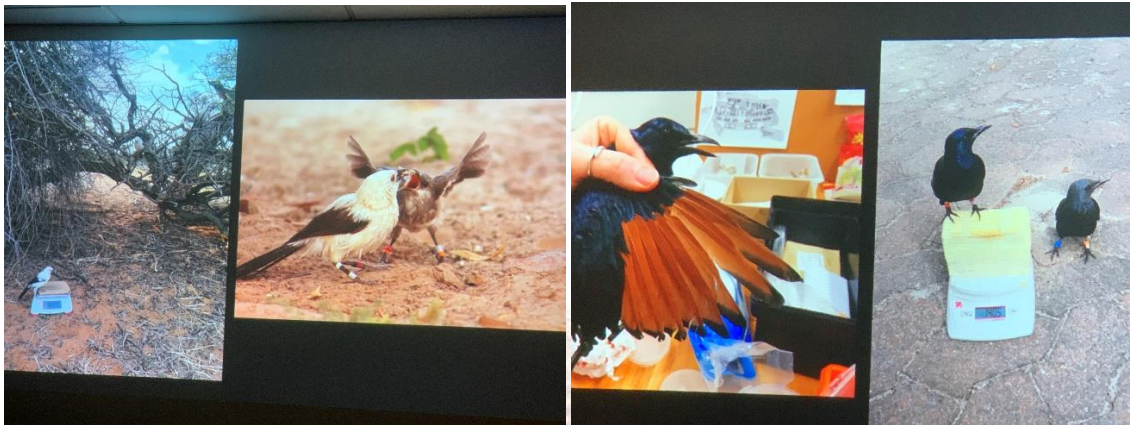
Suzie talked about various projects being undertaken by the institute, including climate change and its impact in the Kalahari Desert where average temperatures have increased by 4 degrees C in just the last decade!! The effects of this are sometimes subtle and insidious as illustrated by impacts on the sociable weaver bird.



Sociable weaver (left) and example of its enormous colonial nest. (Apologies for quality -these are pics of pics)

The nests can weigh tonnes and are a great example of mutualism as the birds bring nutrients to the tree. The nests are also hubs of nutrients and resources for many other species such as barbets. However, as temperatures increase, the birds' social networks start to fragment as local foraging can support less birds in a colony. This reduces breeding success but as the birds are long lived populations can remain steady for several years before the decline is noticed.

Researchers at the institute have trained several species of birds to weigh themselves, again as part of monitoring responses to and effects of climate change. These include southern pied babbler (left) and red winged starling



Hornbills are also victims of climate change. The female plugs the nest hole during incubation and remains inside being fed by the male through a small gap. Great for reducing nest predation but with rising temperatures the conditions inside can quickly become fatal.

(Sorry I'm not sure which hornbill species Suzy was referring to here)



Researchers are working on effectively insulated artificial nest boxes for hornbill to reduce potentially lethal overheating due to climate warming. Note the entrance plugged by the female hornbill.





And finally, we were treated to pictures of Southern ground hornbill. (If you haven't been to Africa its worth a trip just to see either of the two species in this family) Sadly again endangered, this time by logging of potential nest sites.

(Image By Radomil talk - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=192008>)

Many thanks Suzy for generously giving your time and expertise to our wee group!

**QUICK FERNBIRD UPDATE** Paul Fisher

Nelson OSNZ Fernbird project - 98 fernbirds have been banded to date, and there have been 87 recaptures of colour banded birds

There have been at least 25 resighting of colour banded birds at the Wakapuaka Flats. Over the last summer fernbirds have also been banded at Paremata Flats, Marahau/Otuwheru, and Parapara, Ruataniwha and Collingwood in Golden Bay.

Wakapuaka Flats	64
Paremata Flats	4
Marahau	25
Golden Bay	*5
	98



**MOTUEKA SANDSPIT PICTURES** Rebecca Bowater

Winter setting in? Feeling nostalgic for late summer days? Rebecca's superb pictures from the Motueka sandspit this will take you right back there! Note that banded red knot!





**SPOONBILL COUNT UPDATE** --Peter Gaze writes:

'Just a reminder about the spoonbill counts. I'm sort of hoping that with the breeding season over we might be getting higher numbers again as the birds drift westward. I've included some old data of mine from the Boulder Bank roost which is pretty inconsistent with some (many) years in which no birds were counted. Nevertheless, with a bit of imagination, we can possibly pick a trend in which there are more birds over the years and within the year the highest counts are outside of the breeding season.

There are a couple of our count sites where the birds are not very consistent over their roost site. In fact, with the Monaco birds, it is seeming more likely that they have shifted their roost to Orphanage Creek. Perhaps we should be more flexible with our counts so that we do get the highest count at high tide, even if it means looking a little more widely

Boulder Bank roost **Royal Spoonbill**

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2010						6						
2011					n/c			n/c				n/c
2012			n/c	n/c	n/c	n/c		11		n/c		
2013	n/c			n/c				n/c				
2014			4			12	13		n/c			
2015		n/c		9			11			n/c	2	
2016		0	6	24	13	16	13	11	14		n/c	
2017			17	n/c	n/c	14			n/c			n/c
2018	n/c		n/c	n/c	17		n/c	15	n/c			n/c
2019	n/c		n/c	n/c	n/c	n/c	12		n/c	n/c		
2020	0	0	n/c	n/c	n/c	8	0	n/c	12	n/c	0	n/c
2021	n/c	0	n/c	0	0	n/c	12	n/c	17	n/c	0	n/c
2022	0	n/c	11	9	n/c	0	0	14	24	7	11	8
2023	4	4										

## **MYSTERY SURROUNDS WEKA DISCOVERED IN TARANAKI, A BIRD NOT SEEN IN THE REGION SINCE 1930S**

RNZ reported in February that a weka had been seen in Taranaki where it has been extinct since the 1930s. They were common up until 1918, but they were gone from the region by 1938 - and an attempt to reintroduce them on Mt Taranaki in the 1970s was deemed unsuccessful. This obviously poses questions as to its origin Human introduction? Epic journeys? The discovery of a second weka near the small South Taranaki town of Manaia in April suggests that the former is likely. Obviously weka are a NZ endemic but their reintroduction to this area could pose a threat to other native species, particularly invertebrates, many of which are struggling. Well now there's a nice ethical dilemma!





Adult North Island weka.

Russell, July 2014. Courtesy Birds NZ  
Image © Les Feasey by Les Feasey

## **BIRDING IN GHANA HABITAT LOSS AND PICATHARTES Paul Bennett**

This not really a trip report -more an assertion to all of us to count our blessings. Of course, we can always do more and there have been some terrible mistakes in the past but in comparison to many overseas countries the work currently being done in NZ to conserve and restore is extraordinary. This was highlighted by my recent trip to Ghana which I organised almost 4 years ago. Of course, Covid (and knee surgery) got in the way and when it finally came time to go, I could hardly remember why I ever thought it was a good idea!

After 24 hours of actual flight time, I arrived in Accra on the 14<sup>th</sup> March to join a small group birding tour. As with many countries the problems hit you in the face from the moment you leave the airport. Huge population growth, extreme poverty, sprawling urbanisation, plastic waste, enormous palm oil and cocoa monocultures, exploitation by multinational corporations and rich evangelical churches, high level systemic corruption, lack of meaningful employment, dysfunctional infrastructures, the post-colonial blues! In the wetter south we were birding in very small pockets of remnant forest or low-grade secondary growth with emerging trees often being strangled by various invasive species. Some of these areas were “protected” yet often logging trucks would crawl past us and the sound of chainsaws was never far away. Further north into the drier savannah the ecosystem looked more intact. However high levels of overgrazing are resulting in zero regeneration and this habitat too seems doomed as older trees die and cannot be replaced. Despite the above, Ghana is a safe place to visit (although my room caught fire one evening due to extremely dodgy wiring!) and the people are hospitable and friendly. We also managed to see most of the target birds, albeit in less-than-ideal habitat.

Birding highlights have to include the wonderful Picathartes (white necked rock fowl). If you watch Attenborough you will have to have seen footage of this extraordinary bird and its continued existence is one of the few stories of optimism that I encountered. It looks like a



cross between a velociraptor and a crow with an immaculate oiled plumage. Scientists have struggled to classify it and so along with the grey necked picathartes they've ended up giving it its own family.



Picathartes, We were fortunate to see four birds come bounding in over the rocks, settle on branches, re-oil their immaculate plumage and retire for the night.

(Courtesy Greg de Klerk)

Picathartes build nests and roost under overhanging rocks in higher montane forests. About the only relatively easy access site is in Ghana. However, the accessible colonies were being hunted to extinction. Ashanti which is the major tour operator in Ghana went to the village chiefs and asked 'what would it take for you to stop hunting rockfowl?' the reply -a water supply and a school for our kids. Miraculously the funds were raised, the bore was drilled the school built. villagers engaged as guides and the rockfowl, although in isolated and diminished habitats, are doing well -for now.

A second highlight at least for me was the Egyptian Plover which is neither a plover nor is it found in Egypt. To find it we went North towards Burkina Faso and the White Volta River and walked through a small village to the plover site. The photo below shows the main 'square'. Apart from the plastic, we had to avoid stepping in the piles of human excrement. Poverty and zero infrastructure. The plastic will eventually blow into the Volta River and hence to the ocean. However, we saw the plover and a very beautiful bird it is. It used to be thought to be related to pratincoles and coursers and certainly looks as if it could be, but actually like the picathartes it has its very own special family.



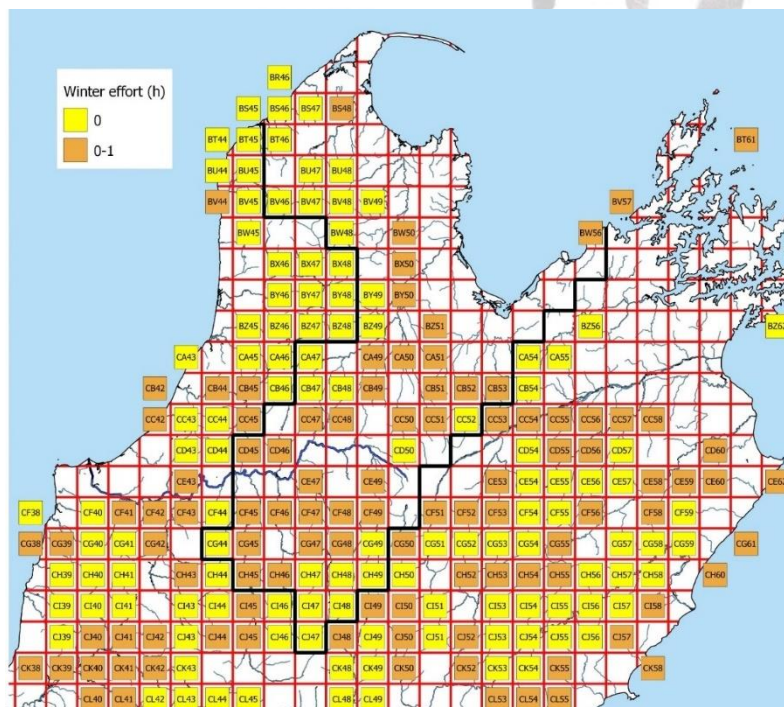
Football and plastic in the village 'square'



Egyptian Plover (courtesy wiki commons)

### **ATLAS UPDATE Robin Toy**

Congratulations to everyone, we now have at least one list for every square in Tasman/Nelson! We have a way to go to cover off the atlas objective of every season, in every habitat, in every square, but we have one more year to do what we can. So, to help you identify priorities, I've been through the list of Tasman/Nelson squares to find those most in need of winter effort. The map below shows squares with no winter effort (yellow) and squares with less than 1 h of winter effort (brown). The black line marks the Tasman/Nelson region. Lists from any square are, of course, valuable, but lists from the yellow and brown square are of greatest value. The table lists these squares together with my knowledge of how easy they are to access. My knowledge may be wrong but should be a good start. It's really easy to download a detailed map for any square you want to visit. Just click this link, then select the relevant region, then the squares alphanumeric code, download and have fun planning your Atlas trip, And as always, check out the Atlas web page for a host of tips and additional information. [https://www.dropbox.com/sh/uzf2pmnfvainss9/AADuyV8kXz\\_PRDxkGHv9v9XCa?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/uzf2pmnfvainss9/AADuyV8kXz_PRDxkGHv9v9XCa?dl=0)





Squares most in need of winter effort	Winter day effort (h)	Road access (* shows dirt road)	Easy foot access	Tramping access (there is a marked route)	Squares most in need of winter effort	Winter day effort (h)	Road access (* shows dirt road)	Easy foot access	Tramping access (there is a marked route)
BW56	0.08	Yes*			CB53	0.37	No	No	Multi-day tramp
BR46	0	Yes*			CC47	0.37	Yes*		
BS45	0	No	No	Day walk	CC48	0.13	Yes*		
BS46	0	Yes*			CC50	0.88	Yes		
BS47	0		Yes		CC51	0.82	Yes		
BS48	0.75	Yes			CC52	0	No	No	Overnight tramp
BT46	0	No	No		CD45	0.28	No	No	Multi-day tramp
BU47	0		Yes		CD46	0.18	Yes*		
BU48	0	No	No	Overnight tramp	CD50	0	No	Yes?	
BV46	0	No	No		CE47	0.4	Yes		
BV47	0	No	No		CE49	0.17	Yes*		
BV48	0	No	No	Multi-day tramp	CF45	0.67	Yes		
BV49	0	No	No	Long day walk	CF46	0.33	Yes		
BW48	0	No	Yes		CF47	0.35	Yes*		
BW50	1	Yes			CF48	0.37	No	No	Day walk
BX50	0.02	Yes			CF49	0.62	No	No	Overnight tramp
BY49	0	Yes*			CG44	0	No	No	
BY50	0.75	Yes			CG45	0.35	Yes		
BZ49	0	Yes*			CG47	0.17	Yes*		
BZ51	0.4	Yes			CG48	0.1	Yes*		
CA47	0	No	No	Long day walk	CG49	0	No	No	Multi-day tramp
CA49	0.72	Yes			CH45	0.17	Yes		
CA50	0.38	Yes			CH46	0.4	Yes		
CA51	0.83	Yes			CH47	0	No	No	
CB47	0	No	No	Multi-day tramp	CH48	0	No	No	Overnight tramp
CB48	0	No	No	Overnight tramp	CH49	0	No	No	Multi-day tramp
CB49	0.5	Yes			CI47	0	No	No	
CB51	0.79	Yes			CI48	0	No	No	Multi-day tramp
CB52	0.93	?	?		CJ47	0	No	No	Overnight tramp

## **AND FURTHER TO THE ABOVE-- HOW ABOUT AN ATLAS FIELD TRIP??**

**David Melville suggests the following and seeks expressions of interest;**

'Further to discussion at Monday's meeting (April 1st) and the data Robin has provided, I propose an **Atlas Field Trip on Saturday 1 July**. Sunrise is 07.54h and sunset 17.08h (a short(ish!) day).



At this stage I would propose meeting at the Flat Rock Cafe at Kohatu at 09.00h - the cafe opens at 08.30 so time for a coffee before we head out birding.

Then a round journey through Tapawera, Tadmire, Glenhope - with a possible diversion to the start of the Wangapeka if the ford is open. This will cover some of the squares that currently are a bit thin on the ground, but can be visited by car. Further details to be provided nearer the time.'

If you are interested or even if Robin's talk at the April 1<sup>st</sup> meeting stirred your conscience, please email David and let him know. [david.melville@xtra.co.nz](mailto:david.melville@xtra.co.nz)

## **BIRDS NZ CONFERENCE 2024**

There is a lot happening at the moment and a great deal of hard work being put into the organisation for the 2024 Birds NZ conference being held here next year. So far, we have the following:

### **Conference committee**

- Sharen Graham (catering) [grahamsharen@gmail.com](mailto:grahamsharen@gmail.com)
- Mark Ayre (field trips) [bullersalbatross@gmail.com](mailto:bullersalbatross@gmail.com)
- Peter Field (updating Field Guide to Birds in Nelson) [p.o.field@xtra.co.nz](mailto:p.o.field@xtra.co.nz)
- Ralph Powlesland [ralph@ralphandmary.nz](mailto:ralph@ralphandmary.nz) Peter Gaze [peterdgaze@gmail.com](mailto:peterdgaze@gmail.com) and David Melville [david.melville@xtra.co.nz](mailto:david.melville@xtra.co.nz) (science papers subcommittee)
- Michelle Bradshaw and Paul Fisher (registrations and conference database)
- Kathryn Richards [kathrynjeanrichards@gmail.com](mailto:kathrynjeanrichards@gmail.com) (hotels and accommodation)
- Paul Griffiths [pgmedia2@gmail.com](mailto:pgmedia2@gmail.com) and Paul Bennett [thebraveryofbeingoutofrange@gmail.com](mailto:thebraveryofbeingoutofrange@gmail.com) (Communications)
- Rebecca Bowater [rebflora1@gmail.com](mailto:rebflora1@gmail.com) and Craig Martin [craigkahu@gmail.com](mailto:craigkahu@gmail.com) (Photographic Competition)

### **The Venues**

- Friday 31 May Council and Regional Reps meeting 2024 will be at the Tides Hotel Nelson (5 minutes' walk from the Trafalgar Centre).
- Sat 1st June and Sun 2<sup>nd</sup> June scientific papers and presentations at the Trafalgar Centre

### **Catering**

- Negotiations are still ongoing with various Nelson caterers.

### **Science Committee**

- The Nelson Conference 2024 Science Committee will consist of 4 eminent and well-known ornithologists. Ralph Powlesland, Graeme Elliott, Ron Moorhouse and Kevin Parker. Ralph Powlesland has agreed to be the lead convener for the group. Each person has also agreed to lead and MC a morning or afternoon session of science presentations.

## Online Registrations

- Michelle Bradshaw, the Banding Officer, for the New Zealand National Bird Banding Scheme, will supervise online registrations for the Nelson Conference 2024.

## Workshop options

- No decision has yet been made on workshop options for Nelson 2024. We note that there were no workshops last year in Christchurch as the presentations overran the allotted time and the workshops lost out.

## Conference pack

- For the conference pack options we have decided to go paperless with just 30 or so packs printed off for the benefit of delegates who have no computer and prefer not to read the programme from their phones or tablets.

## Field Trips

- The goal of the Nelson Conference field trips is to showcase three areas of outstanding natural beauty in the Nelson Tasman region. Namely,
  1. **The Waimarama Brook Sanctuary;** (Morning breakfast at the Waimarama Brook Sanctuary in Nelson. This could take place alongside a fernbird moult / catching session with a lecture at the same time.)
  2. **Kahurangi National Park** and the work of Friends of the Flora; Two trip options trips to see forest and sub alpine birds.
    - Option 1 For strong walkers and keen trampers Mount Arthur Hut and downwards looking for rarely seen species.
    - Option 2. To look for blue duck and forest birds down past Flora track hut and along the river. This is the easier option
  3. **Abel Tasman National Park** A trip featuring the Janzsoon Project.

## Accommodation discounts

- The Tides Hotel has 45 onsite studio rooms and a sister property just across the road called Delorenzo Studio Apartments with 30 studio apartments. Birds NZ delegates would all be offered a 5% discount. No other accommodation providers have yet been approached.

## NEXT WADER COUNT

Just a heads up that the next Top of the South/Te Tau Ihu wader count will be 7-9 July. Rob S and or David will provide further details.



## **ALWAYS CARRY A CAMERA!**

Christine Grove took these R B Gull leg band pics at the Raumanika reserve, Staples Street, Motueka, sent them to Mike Bell and received this reply;



'Morena Christine,

Sorry for the delay getting back to you on these. But you have a couple of crackers! White T88, a chick banded on the Wairau River in Dec 2014, back breeding on the Wairau in 2016 (most start breeding as 2 year-olds). It has been seen over wintering Motueka/Nelson area in winter 2016 and 2018. And was found breeding on the Awatere River in 2019 (a large number of normally breeding Wairau birds breed on the Awatere this year for some reason). But has not been seen since. So I suspect this guy is breeding somewhere else. So an awesome find, missing for almost 4 years! White Y76 was banded on the Wairau in Nov 2017, it was then seen on Bell's Island Nelson Feb 2018, but has not been seen since!!! So, you have found it after 5 years missing! It must have shifted and breed somewhere else....So Absolutely stunning records, thank you so much!!'

## **NEWSLETTER DATES**

The following are approximate dates for the newsletter forward into next year. These are approximate and subject to cyclones, plagues, editor breakdown etc.

<b><u>Newsletter</u></b>	<b><u>Period</u></b>	<b><u>Submissions by</u></b>	<b><u>Sent Out</u></b>
Tōrea pango 8	June/July	July 7	July 14
Tōrea pango 9	Aug/Sept	Sept 7	Sept 14
Tōrea pango10	Oct/ Nov	Nov 7	Nov 14
Tōrea pango11	Dec/Jan	Jan 7	Jan 14 2024

## **A MORNING WITH WORMCATCHERS** David Melville

Coronation Day dawned damp and grey; >90mm of rain had fallen in the previous 36 hours and there was a 4.1m high tide predicted for 1004h. A perfect morning for looking for Variable and South Island Pied Worm catchers.

Both SIPOs and VOCs are very partial to earthworms and after heavy rain will often head inland to local playing fields and other areas with relatively short grass to forage. I spent the

morning checking out the local sites with good results, despite intermittent rain – 995 SIPOs and 463 VOCs recorded (see Table).

Site	SIPO	VOC	Flags SIPO	Flags VOC
Neale Park, Nelson	260	113	4	8
Tahunanui Playingfields, Nelson	179	40	0	1
Saxton Field, Richmond	275	59	6	3
Jubilee Park, Richmond	0	0	0	0
Richmond A&P Showground	265	171	8	3
Mapua Kite Park	16	80	1	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>995</b>	<b>463</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>25</b>

Of the 19 SIPOs observed with leg flags, two were young birds from the Upper Rangitata, Canterbury: 'ORANGE 00' has settled in district, having first been seen on 13 February 2022 and has previously been recorded at Neale Park, the East End of Rabbit Island, Bell Island Shellbank and Saxton Field. The second Rangitata bird 'ORANGE 44', which is one of the current season's juveniles, was at the Richmond A&P Showgrounds and is sporting a GPS/GSM backpack.

Unfortunately, the population of sheep at the A&P Showground is insufficient to keep the grass at a suitable height for flag reading so there were more marked birds than I was able to read!

All sightings of flagged oystercatchers and wormcatchers are valuable so please keep a look out – a wet morning provides an opportunity for some interesting and valuable observations.

David Melville [david.melville@xtra.co.nz]

## **AND TO FINISH ---**

A couple of fine photos from Rebecca Bowater. Rebecca says that she spends most of her time these days 'on the ground' photographing fungi. Obviously, she must glance up from time to time to have snapped these two lovely shots of a very moustachioed South Island Robin and two of our (8? If you count white necked) possible heron species posing for the camera. Congratulations to Rebecca on the publication of the third edition of her wonderful fungi book!!







And **Jennie Warr** who joined one of our meetings, sent me these evocative photos, email and feedback about a stay in Collingwood. ----Humour???

'Here is the marvellous wee spot I mentioned. It doesn't look much here as the tide is out but when the tide was in to see so many birds (Godwits and Oyster Catchers) here right by the main road was incredible. It is just west of Pakawau...and there is a lovely Cafe here for tucker too (the Old School Cafe) which is a bonus. The second thing was a lovely rustic place we stayed in at Collingwood. I will send the link....Looking out each day I'd see at least 20 Godwits just mooching around so I loved this. A family of Quail in the garden and just a super spot private and very simple. I loved the meeting, especially the humour.'

