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Otago Region Newsletter 6/2023

June 2023



Ornithological Snippets

An immature **Great Crested Grebe** was present at Karitane from 29 May to at least 11 June, while 2 adults were on Upper Manorburn Reservoir on 5 June.

SI Pied Oystercatcher seem to have been heading inland early, with sightings of 14 near Omakau on 7 June, 13 at Tuapeka Mouth on 20, and 7 near on Luggate 21. In a similar vein 14 **Pied Stilt** were near Paerau on 3 June.

A possible **NZ Storm-Petrel** was photographed off Taiaroa Head on 28 May.

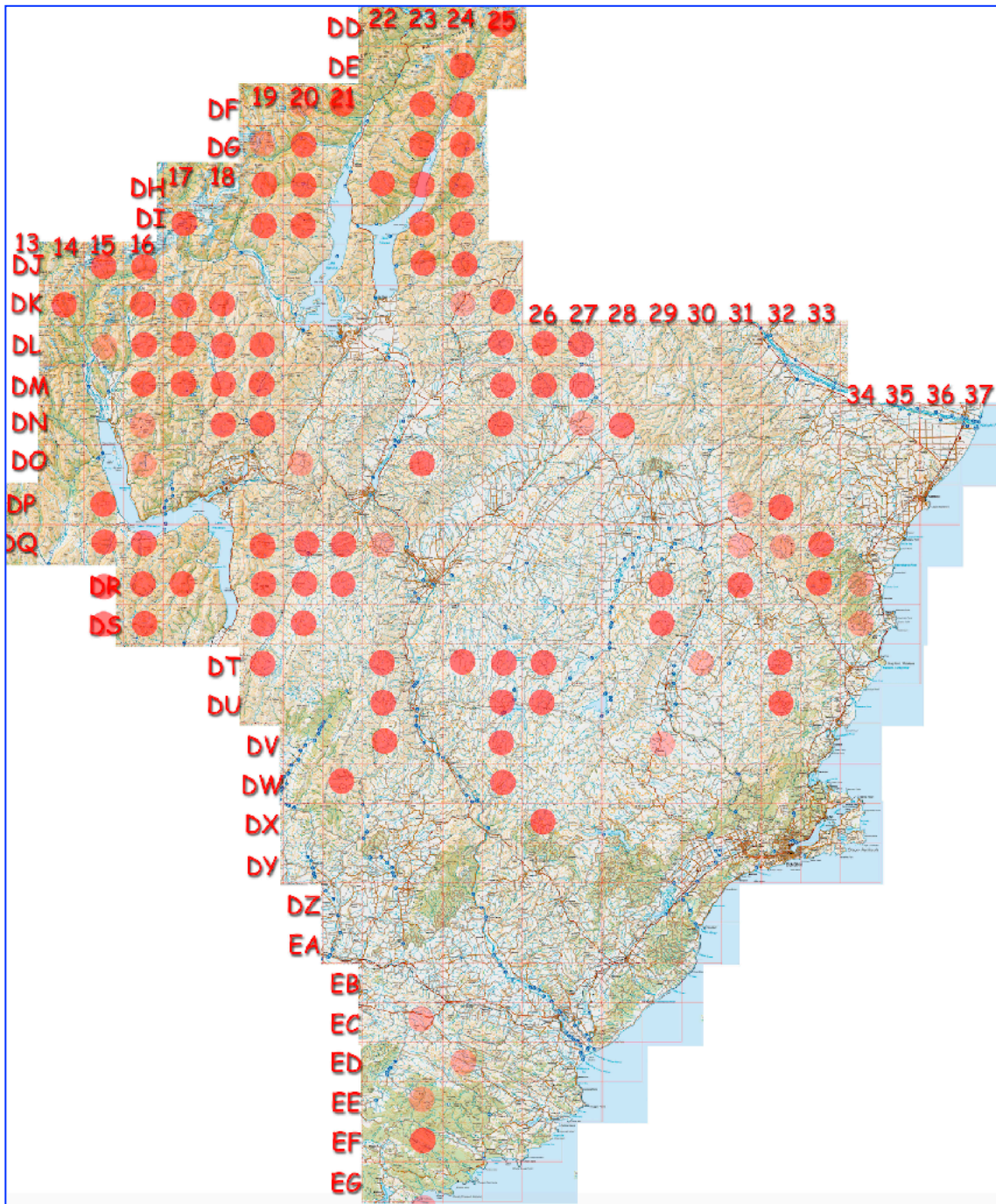
There have been numerous **White Heron** sightings, with reports from Hawkesbury Lagoon (up to 3), Tomahawk Lagoon (2), Karitane, Kaikorai Lagoon, and Brighton; a **Little Egret** at Hawkesbury from 31 May was seen by many observers. A possible **Intermediate Egret** was also reported from Hawkesbury, but not confirmed.

Finally **Blackbird** and **Song Thrush** have been seen in good numbers, with c150 of the latter near Balclutha on 15 June, feeding in frosted paddocks.

Please send any interesting reports to cluthaphotos@gmail.com **Richard Schofield**

eBird News

We now have only 2 months left of the final winter of the Atlas, and there are still plenty of options to make a telling contribution. Although many (most?) of the squares with no coverage are in the mountains, and relatively inaccessible, there are other areas, notably around the Maniototo and St Bathans areas that could prove rewarding with a bit of effort. I have included an up-to-date map of winter needs; please get in touch if you would like suggestions for any particular areas.



Richard 027 281 8701 or cluthaphotos@gmail.com

BirdsNZ Otago Branch News

Wader Count

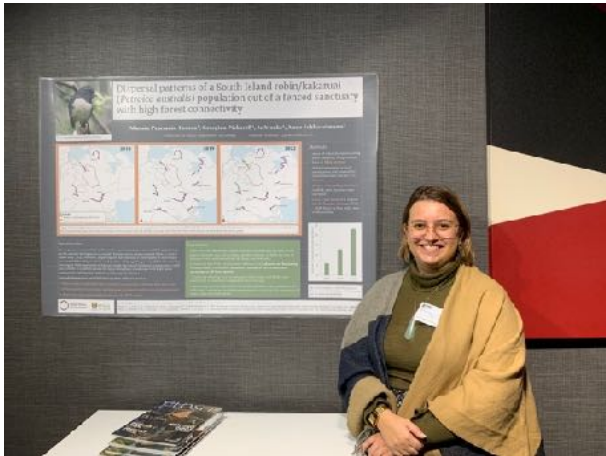
Volunteers wanted for wader count on **Sunday July 2**. High tide (2M) at Dunedin is at 2.50pm.

In case of bad weather the reserve day is Saturday July 29 when high tide (1.84M) is at 12.38pm. All members are most welcome to participate.

Please contact Maree Johnstone email: mareej@kinect.co.nz, phone 027 6609446 to be assigned to a team.

NZ Bird Conference, New Plymouth, King's Birthday Weekend

Awards

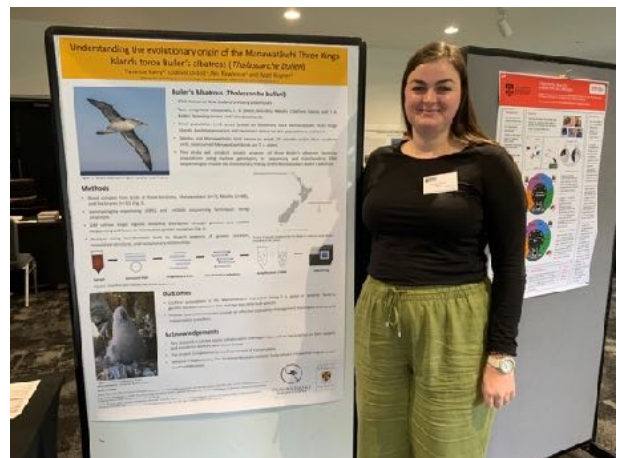


Manaia

Otago members featured at conference. 9 Otago members made the trip. Bruce, of course, is President. It was really good to see our students presenting their research. The best student speaker was won by Pascale Lubbe who was the speaker at our Otago May meeting, and the best student poster was won by Manaia who will be talking to us at the June meeting.



Pascale

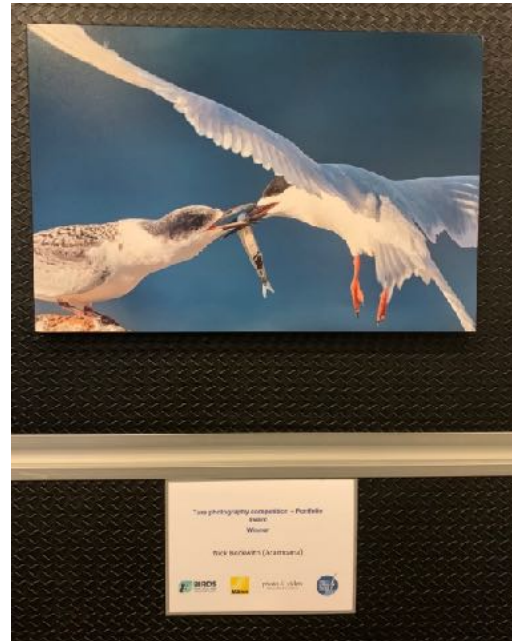


Vanessa

Congratulations. The Otago region came third in % increase in membership over the past year.

Tara Photography Competition

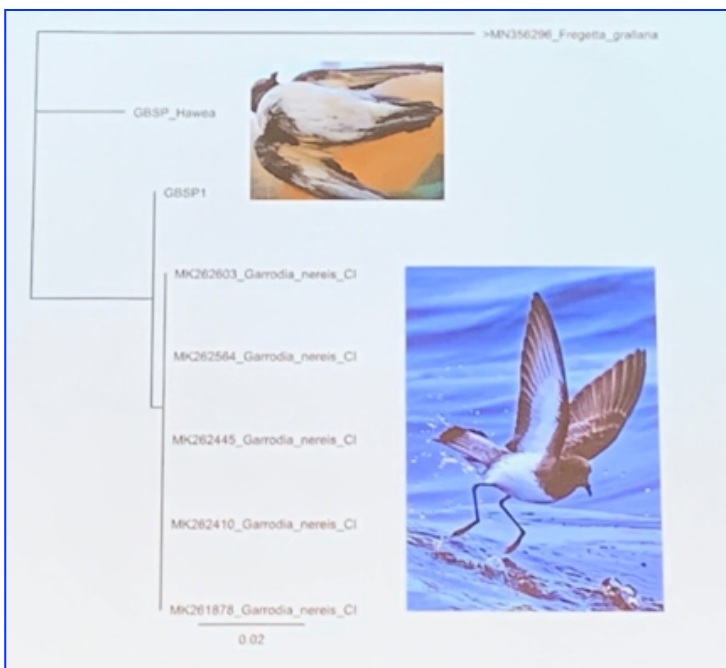
This competition was to take photographs of WFT carrying prey items to learn about the feeding biology of these terns. Nick Beckwith spent many happy and productive hours at Aramoana with his camera and submitted dozens of photos. Nick won the best portfolio section; congratulations.



Scientific presentations

Several of the sessions focussed on birds and conservation projects in Taranaki; seabirds, little blue penguin, and a globally important 3 million year old fossil site. Ex Otago member Sara Larcombe is helping facilitate seabird havens.

Genomic versus gene level analysis is the key tool for studying species; Natalie Forsdick, also ex Otago member, gave genomic evidence the Antipodean and Gibson albatross are genetically distinct and should be considered separate species.



Petrina's grey-backed petrel, which she found wrecked at Hawea, featured in the presentation by Colin Miscelly of Te Papa. He showed that Petrina's bird was morphologically and genetically distinct from all other known populations.

Wildlife Management International presented results of a trial they did to create enhanced riverbed islands for black-fronted terns (weed removal, channel to separate from mainland at a cost of \$25000); % fledged chicks increased from 3% before to 97% success after enhancement.

Abstracts of all the presentations can be found on the Birds NZ website.



Members of Council and the Regional Representatives

Michael Szabo

Regional Representatives Meeting, Friday 1 June

This was attended by 19 representatives the day before the conference. We had an update on the Atlas project and plans to cover the more difficult squares.

Rachel presented the plans for the Young Birders Camp at Makarora, January 2024.

The use of eBird and zoom was discussed.

Health and Safety issues and Birds NZ Liability insurance was discussed.

I proposed a repeat Royal Spoonbill Census (previous one, 2012); this was agreed and is planned for July/August 2024. Recces for spoonbill locations are to be made during the winter wader counts.

Mary Thompson



Te Tatauranga o ngā Manu Māra o Aotearoa – The New Zealand Garden Bird Survey

[https://gardenbirdsurvey.nz/](https://gardenbirdssurvey.nz/)

NZ Bird Conference Awardees



2023 award winners with Taranaki Regional Representative Peter Fryer and Birds New Zealand President Bruce McKinlay (back right), and Vice President Natalie Forsdick (standing at left) with the Birds New Zealand mascot 'Orbell the Takahe'.

Faunatech student prize sponsor Richard McMillan (top left). Student talk and poster award winners (right from Natalie Forsdick): Shannon Ritter, Kamyra Patel, Taneal Gulliver. R.A. Falla Award winner Biz Bell (centre in black 'Petrel Head' T-Shirt).

Meritorious Service Award winner Gwenda Pulham (green shawl) with Denise Poyner (red jacket) and Mary Thompson (blue jacket), both winners in other categories.

Best urban bird photo category winner Julie Paice is standing behind Gwenda and Denise.

L-R (kneeling): Executive Officer Ingrid Hutzler with student talk award winner Pascale Lubbe and conference student poster award winner Manaia Pearmain-Fenton.

Many thanks to Faunatech, Toi Toi Wines and Potton & Burton for donating prizes.

The Little Egret and a bonus Marsh Crake at Hawksbury Lagoon

On a cold but calm Thursday 8th June, Sue and I headed to Hawksbury to see the Little Egret that had been reported on eBird the day before I left for conference.



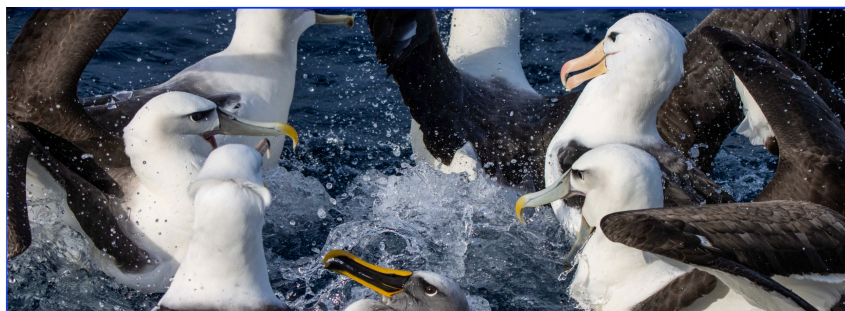
Twelve royal spoonbill were sweeping for food and two white heron with them away over in the south east corner so the telescope was needed to get a better look. One of the white herons seemed smaller so I thought that was the little egret but on looking more closely I spotted an even smaller white heron, and could judge its size by the nearby white-faced heron.

Every so often it would make a short run with wings outstretched then continue feeding more sedately. Once it made quite a determined run towards the shoreline so I checked through telescope to see what was happening and amazingly I saw a marsh crake running about on the mud. It may have been the target of the egret and certainly the egret's actions alerted me to it.



The marsh crake continued feeding in view for about 15 minutes. I think this is the first reported sighting of a marsh crake at Hawksbury. We watched for over an hour and by the time we left the little egret had moved to feed closer to the eastern causeway along with a spoonbill, a white heron and white-faced heron – all in a single view. A great way to spend a winter lunchtime.

Mary Thompson



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/birdsotago/>



Makarora Field Camp for Young Birders (13 - 18 years) based at Makarora near the head of Lake Wanaka

8 – 13 January 2024

Led by Aspiring Biodiversity Trust with Birds New Zealand

- See wrybill/ngutuparore, black-fronted tern/tarapirohe, black-billed gull/tarapuka, banded dotterel/pohowera breeding on the braided river. The nearby beech/podocarp forest provides habitat for pīpīpi, mohua, kākā, ruru. Remnant populations of rock wren/pīwauwau, kea and whio live in the alpine areas.
- Take part in mist-netting, bird banding, 5 minute bird counts, predator control, river-bird survey, acoustic survey for bats, and more.
- Learn about geophysiography, biodiversity monitoring and threat management from practising experts.

Include this unique birding experience in your summer holidays!

Cost \$450 per person (possible bursaries)
Accommodation in cabins and all meals catered
To register your interest and obtain further details
email info@aspiringbiodiversity.co.nz

Please pass this news about the camp to any young birders you know.

If you might be available to help with any aspect of the camp, even for one or two days please contact Rachel info@aspiringbiodiversity.co.nz

Accommodation in en suite cabins is provided for helpers.

Rachel is particularly looking for someone for the important role of camp/mum/dad/ or supervisor/ after hours, etc. That person would help keep the students on track (if needed), join in with various activities of interest or stay back at camp. They would also ensure a no alcohol/ or other substances policy during the event.

Birds NZ nation-wide Royal Spoonbill Census and Colony and Nest Count 2024

“Royal spoonbill numbers have just gone ballistic; they’re a success story in NZ”. Comment made by Peter Fryer during RadioNZ interview.

Birds NZ has been following the increase in population and breeding of Royal Spoonbill in NZ since the late 70s. The last census was in 2012. We have the rare opportunity to document this accurately for this new arrival. It was agreed at the RR meeting that Birds NZ regions should collectively do another census and colony and nest count in 2024. I offered to organise these surveys.

In preparation for this census I am suggesting that during our Atlassing and the up-coming winter wader count that we look for where any winter locations of Royal spoonbill. We will also check and identify possible locations of breeding colonies during this coming summer; usually undisturbed areas away from humans.

This recce will help us get some idea of what will be required to do the survey; perhaps boats for access, etc. We will be applying for funds from the Project Assistance Fund for this.



Nick Beckwith

Mary Thompson



Karitane Coast Rd 24 May, 4.38pm Martine Darrou

Programme 2023

Monthly Indoor Meetings will be held on the 4th Tuesday at 7.30pm in the Valley Project Community Rooms, 262 North Road, NEV. Just past the primary school, with a parking area in front. Look for the NZ Falcon Mural.

We will try to zoom the talks live for those unable to attend. We welcome our members from Central Otago area and others who can't get to Dunedin, and members not so comfortable with attending meetings at this time. You can join the meetings by Zoom link.

A new Zoom link for meetings

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83476387704?pwd=Vy9Fd2VEZk4zSnF6Z05pVnljZjBhdz0>

The meeting passcode is: 523492

June, Tuesday 27	Manaia Pearmain-Fenton - MSc research; Silver Linings: Following Silver Stream and Orokonui Kākāruai/ South Island robin breeding behaviours over a single season
July, Sunday 2	Winter Wader count. High tide 14.50pm, 2m. (Back-up day 29th July about noon). To join a counting group please contact Maree mareej@kinect.co.nz or txt 0276609446
July, Tuesday 25	Kurien Koshy Yohannan - wildlife photography Painting with Light
August, Tuesday 22	Francesca Cunninghame - two Forest and Bird projects Restoring seabird colonies on Otago Peninsula Landscape-scale conservation in the Tautuku area
September, Tuesday 26	Amy Adams Management of a critically endangered population of Fairy Terns in Victoria
October, Tuesday 24	Hamish Spencer Birding in Colombia
November, Tuesday 28	Abby Smith will compère the annual Quiz Night

Regular Field trips are held, usually on first Saturdays or Sundays. Check for details within the newsletters. We carpool for these trips and share expenses.

Some dates for field trips (dates may be subject to change and details still to be announced)

Sunday 30 July Town Belt and 5MBC with AAPES university students

Sunday 10 September Guided Bird watching walks, Dunedin Botanic Garden

Sunday 29 October (or 5 Nov) 5MBC training day for members of the public; Town Belt Bird Count Trail; in conjunction with City Sanctuary and DCC.

Suggestions for locations for field trips and atlassing trips, and offers to help lead trips would really be appreciated, please contact Mary birds.otago@birdsnz.org.nz

Contributions for inclusion in the next newsletter should reach the editor by **17 July**
sodlin@gmail.com

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