

TŌREA PANGO



NELSON BRANCH BIRDS NZ. NEWSLETTER ISSUE 8. June/July 2023

SUMMARY OF LAST MEETINGS

Note-There was no June meeting as many members were attending the Birds NZ annual conference.

July 3rd

31 people attended the July meeting at the Richmond Library. This is certainly the most that I have seen at a meeting and I am sure is indicative of the current strength of our group and the work and effort that has gone into organizing positive, entertaining and informative meetings. Long may it last.

- Robert Schadewinkel, (ecologist at the Waimarama/ Brook Sanctuary) together with Sean* (geologist and kakariki convert) gave a great update on the Brook /Waimarama sanctuary and the successful introduction of Orange-fronted parakeet/kākāriki karaka. See article “DEVELOPMENTS AT WAIMARAMA / KĀKĀRIKI KARAKA” below. *Apologies Sean for first name only but I honestly don't think your mate Robert even mentioned your last name!
- Paul Fisher talked on the OSNZ Nelson Fernbird Project with highlights from two years of study and the banding of 99 fernbirds. See 'NELSON OSNZ MĀTĀTĀ FERNBIRD STUDY' below.
- David Melville reported back on the recent Atasing trip.

MEETINGS FOR THE REST OF 2023 (provisional)

August 7th Winifred Long from the Remutaka Conservation Trust: Conservation of the North Island Brown Kiwi.

September 4th Ruth Bollongino from Project Janszoon on bird monitoring in Abel Tasman

October 2nd Alison Ballance on the Takahe, David Melville on bird flu (tentative)

November 6th Prof Bart Kempanaers, Max Planck Institute (tentative)

December 2nd (Sat) Xmas BBQ at the Melville's

LATEST SIGHTINGS

It seems to have been pretty quiet lately apart from Eastern cattle egrets and the usual terns reported from around the country. However, Vicky Melville sighted a glossy ibis in Redwoods Valley in early July. One wonders how long it will be before this almost cosmopolitan species becomes a normal feature of our avifauna.



Hot off the press. This tern was reported last week on the Seabirds and Pelagics Australia FB site by Peter Langland. He saw it out from the beach on at Wainono Lagoon South Canterbury. Seems to have a few people stumped?

BELL ISLAND SHELLBANK PROJECT David Melville

Further to the note in Tōrea Pango DOC contractors have now undertaken two rounds of spraying exotic vegetation on the Shell bank and the iceplant is certainly looking unhappy. [see photo]

The first visit to check on vegetation and to see if there are any Caspian Terns about is on Sunday 30 July. Low tide is at 1316h 1.3m - this will allow us unrestricted access as the causeway will not be flooded. As Caspian Terns are not expected to start laying until early September this trip will probably be more about the vegetation and the state of the Shell bank than the birds! (But who knows?).

Access to the site is through a locked gate so we need to enter/depart as a group.

I will be at the entrance to Greenacres Golf Course [4 Barnett Avenue, Best Island] at 1300h. The visit will probably last about 1.5 hours. I suggest wearing gum boots.

If anyone is interested in joining this trip, please email me: david.melville@xtra.co.nz



The
Shellbank

ATLAS FIELD TRIP REPORT 1 July 2023 David Melville

Seven brave souls [Daria Erastova, Christine Grove, Pete Gaze, Chris Harris, Jane Meiforth, Sharen Graham, David Melville] decided that, despite the weather forecast, it was worth a trip around the Kohatu-Tadmores-Glenhope circuit on 1 July to look at some of the region's less atlased, (*is that even a word? Ed.*) but still easily accessible, country. We met at the Flat Rock Café for a quick coffee before dividing the team in two – one went clockwise, the other anticlockwise round the circuit.

The weather was better than forecast with only a sprinkling of rain, and much sunshine – but it was cold and snow had come quite low the previous day (some on Hope Saddle).

A total of 7 squares were visited with 34 checklists completed. The table below shows the totals before and after the survey.

Square	Total time before	Total time after	Species observed before	Species observed after
BZ49	2.17	3.89	22	24
BZ50	15.23	15.76	40	41
CA49	1.8	2.38	26	27
CA50	9.46	9.79	30	30
CB49	4.08	5.00	28	30
CB50	3.16	3.49	30	30
CC49	10.32	12.24	36	36

All squares are still noted as “incomplete” so we hope to repeat the trip again during the remaining 10 months of the Atlas project so we have at least one visit each season. A greater challenge will be getting nocturnal coverage, but talking with locals is often a good way of getting information on Morepork/Ruru.



Photos from the atlasing trip courtesy of Christine Grove. Inevitably they will be hybrids, but the birds in photo 1 don't look too bad for grey duck?

A NOTE OF CAUTION! (Editor)



Bali Mynah -Almost poached to extinction in the wild. (Photo Paul Bennett)

I was in Bali a few weeks ago (at the end of May) on a short non-birding holiday with Marina (wife). However, it would have been rude to visit such a beautiful island without at least trying to see all the possible endemics. Marina is actually good for a couple of days birding provided she gets coffee in the morning and alcohol in the evening and thus supplied, we managed to find most of the species without too much adverse impact on our relationship. However, in the process we came across groups of bird trappers sneaking into reserves, plying their hideous trade. As in many parts of S.E. Asia, Illegal trapping and

poaching is probably as great a threat as habitat loss, particularly to iconic species such as the Bali mynah (formerly Rothschild's grackle) which is a coveted cage bird. These wonderful creatures, were almost poached to extinction and are now only found in a small, highly protected habitat after reintroduction of captive bred birds from Chester Zoo in the UK. There is also some deal with captive breeders which I didn't totally understand but which appears to have made poaching less financially desirable. Talking to local birders I was again implored ***not to record specific locations of sightings on E-bird*** as this serves as a ***prime source of information to trappers***. Now don't get me wrong, I'm sure the Atlas project, population monitoring, distribution profiles and many other spin offs from ebird recordings are highly useful and provide significant data which can be used for all sorts of scientific and conservation purposes. However, if you have any sniff of an idea that poaching may be an issue when overseas, please hide the location of any ebird entries you make for sensitive species especially for things like laughing thrushes, toucans, raptors, shamas, parrots etc, which have a very high market value. And if you aren't convinced, take a stroll through a Denpasar or Bangkok bird market. You may even want to consider that in Japan you can apparently buy a kea for \$25000!

FALCONS IN RICHMOND Don Cooper recalls-----

"A couple of years ago, I was privileged to observe the visits of a New Zealand falcon to a garden in a busy Richmond Street. The attraction was a tree that feral pigeons nested in, hence it was a target for some easy food. The property owner learnt that I was interested in birds and photography and would give me a phone call when a falcon made its appearance. I could get there in less than five minutes. I had reason to believe that the falcon was nesting in the vicinity of the fire lookout above Richmond, so it was in a good position to observe any pigeon movements. It normally took its prey to the ground to eat, sometimes close to the garden boundary fence only a couple of metres from where people were walking their dogs. On one occasion the picnic table was chosen for its feast. Sometimes it took it's kill in to lower branches of a garden tree."



Photo 1-- the falcon's crop is looking full and the head and some breast of the pigeon has been eaten. At this point it took the carcass up into a birch tree and left it there overnight.



Photo 2
The following morning, I was told the bird was back and well placed to observe from the lounge window the most comfortable wildlife viewing ever.

SPECIAL OFFER -and a chance to support Alison

Potton & Burton Publishing have a [Special Offer](#) of 10% online discount with free delivery in NZ to all Birds New Zealand members until 31 August 2023 using the code: **NZBIRD23**

The code can be used at the online shopping cart on their website: pottonandburton.co.nz/
The Special Offer applies to the following six book titles:

- **Takahe: Bird of Dreams - Alison Ballance**
- **Kakapo - Alison Ballance**
- **New Zealand Bird Paintings - Ray Ching**
- **New Zealand Seabirds - Kerry-Jayne Wilson**
- **Moa - Quinn Berentson**
- **Drawn to the wild - Nicolas Dillon**

www.birdsnz.org.nz

FROM THE CONFERENCE

Paul G has sent me **loads** of pictures from the June Conference- Enough in fact to fill many newsletters. Here's a couple for your entertainment.



2023 award winners
(Photo Michael Szabo.)

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.



Superheroes ready for action! Your Council and Regional Reps. Spot the Griffo! (Photo Michael Szabo.)



Plus- Biz Belle gets to feature in Tōrea Pango just because I love her T-shirt (Photo Michael Szabo.)

DEVELOPMENTS AT WAIMARAMA / KĀKĀRIKI KARAKA

Robert gave a very interesting talk on the introduction of the kākāriki karaka to the Brook sanctuary. He started by telling us what is special about the Brook. Obviously, bio security here is super important but very difficult to put into effect. Unlike some predator free fences, the construction of the Brook fence posed a number of challenges. The sanctuary climbs from 100m to 900 m and traverses some rugged terrain. Events like storms, falling trees and slips disturb or destroy fences and constant monitoring is needed. The terrain makes it almost impossible for volunteers to climb the almost vertical slopes to set traps and, so far, the only means of pest control is 1080 which remains unpopular with some sectors of the public. However, it has proved effective and the Brook represents the only Southern beech forest in the world which has only mice as pests.



The difficulties of installing and maintaining the fence were well illustrated by Robert's slides showing an 'easy as' fence compared to the Brook! (Please note all photos here are shots I took of the power point presentation. Not sure whose intellectual property a photo of a photo is but credit to Robert and Shaun!)

Unlike most NZ sanctuaries, the Brook backs on to continuous forest and so has connectivity through to Marlborough and the lower South Island. All this and only 4 km from the Nelson CBD!

Robert handed over to Shaun to tell us about the kakariki karaka. Shaun is a geologist but has found himself increasingly involved with kakariki. The Brook is now one of three main sites for kakariki karaka with approximately 120 birds, and certainly the site with the easiest access. Brook birds are released from captive breeding programs at the age of three months. Shaun told us how important it is to know what happens after the release of birds as they can behave quite strangely. This may possibly be due to stress or trying to adapt to the new environment.



After release around half of the orange fronted parakeets disappear. There is no pest control in the surrounding forest and so birds that move out of the sanctuary into this may not survive.



Release Aviary. The young birds are formally welcomed and put into release aviaries you have two Avery's one for males and one female birds stay here for two nights to allow them to calm and subtle they are then released into the sanctuary early in the morning.

Initially birds are monitored by radio transmitters. Camera traps are also set up around feeding stations. Birds are banded with different coloured rings and can be identified individually from the camera trap photos. This can be a huge job as thousands of photos can be taken per week.

It has been very encouraging to see the quick breeding success of released birds. 90% of nest holes are in beech trees. Shaun says that he will often spend up to 3 hours watching a nest hole to confirm that it is active by observing a feeding visit. Kākāriki karaka start breeding in response to food availability and can produce multiple broods through the year providing food is available.



As nesting holes are often quite high up it can be very tricky to identify the birds from leg bands in this situation.

Thanks to you both for a great talk!

ENDANGERED SPECIES AOTEAROA WITH WWF

I imagine many will be watching this programme which airs every Monday from 3 July to 7 August 2023 at 8.30pm on TVNZ1 and is available on TVNZ+. It's fronted by comedian, actor and presenter Pax Assadi (The Great Kiwi Bake Off, Raised by Refugees) and conservationist Nicola Toki with DOC rangers, scientists, locals, iwi, and hapū all helping inform us about what makes New Zealand's endangered species unique and how we can all help to protect them. If you haven't seen it then it's definitely worth a look. While some aspects of the program may cause rolling eyeball syndrome in the more scientific amongst us, it's definitely good publicity and may well awaken interest and new thinking in many.



Nicola Toki and Pax Assadi

Photo TVNZ+

NELSON 2024 PHOTO COMPETITION

Paul G has sent out this information for the 2024 conference photo competition. Exciting stuff and with the quality of photos taken by some of our local members, I reckon we might have a home ground advantage! "Conference attendees are invited to enter their photos into the 2024 Birds NZ photo competition.

There are 4 categories

1. Open Category: a photo of a New Zealand bird(s)
2. Bird behaviour: a photo of a New Zealand bird(s) engaged in some activity, such as flying, feeding, displaying, fighting etc...
3. A NZ bird in moult - this is to publicise the OSNZ moult scheme and highlight the value of photographs (especially of birds in flight) - only birds that have a moult card qualify for entry. For more information on bird moult and to download a moult card go to the BirdsNZ website here: (<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/schemes/moult-recording-scheme/>)
4. A marked NZ bird: this is to encourage photographers to report tagged birds to the Banding Office - only records submitted to the Banding Office qualify for entry.

For more information on banded birds go to the Department of Conservation bird banding website, 'Falcon', here

<https://birdbanding.doc.govt.nz/>

- Photos must be printed on colour or black-and-white, landscape or portrait format.
- Sizes between:
 - 5 x 7 (12 x 18cms) smallest size,
 - 8 x 12 (21 x 30cms) largest size (A4)
- Photos must be of a NZ bird taken by the entrant who is a member of Birds New Zealand. The bird should be wild and not caged or restrained.
- Photos must have been taken within the 24 months prior to the date of the 2024 Nelson conference (1st June 2024)
- A maximum of 2 photos may be entered in each of the 4 categories
- Photos may only have a minimal amount of software improvement, such as: cropping, sharpening, exposure and contrast. No features may be added or removed from the original capture.
- Photos are to be brought to the conference in person and submitted to the photography competition desk. Photos are to be removed from display by the owners at the end of the conference.
- No photos are to be sent to Nelson organisers.
- Each photo will have a number, a title, a date and place to identify it. The delegates name and cell phone number should be given to the photo desk and not be placed on the photo.
- The four categories will be judged by a popular vote of BirdsNZ members attending the conference. Voting slips will be issued at Sunday morning tea and voting will end after Sunday lunch. Votes will be counted at 1pm. Prizes will be awarded for 1st and 2nd in each category.
- The 2 specialist categories will be first vetted by a member of the society experienced in moult and banding.

A digital copy of your photo may be sent by email to the organiser to be placed on a rolling display for delegates to enjoy in the foyer during breaks for drinks and meals. pgmedia2@gmail.com ”

AND ON THE SUBJECT OF PHOTO COMPETITIONS—

David Melville has offered the grand prize of a chocolate fish (guaranteed completely un nibbled) plus the winner will get a moment of glory in Tōrea pango for the best photo of the first thrush nest of the year - which can't be far away now - they have been singing for weeks. However a prize of such magnitude is not won lightly To be eligible your photo must be accompanied by:

- A confirmed breeding record for the Atlas.
- A completed nest record card. Nest Record Scheme - Birds New Zealand (birdsnz.org.nz)

To compete, send the photo to me along with evidence of 1 and 2 above at thebraveryofbeingoutofrange@gmail.com before Aug 30th. Apparently, I am the judge, for which task I will employ criteria invented by as yet untapped algorithms lurking in my cerebellum. Oh, and I might just chuck in a bottle of moderately cheap and nasty wine to complement the fish.



Song thrush/ Manukai-hua-rakau. Nest with four eggs. Kerikeri, Northland, November 2011. (Image © Neil Fitzgerald by www.neilfitzgeraldphoto.co.nz courtesy Birds NZ)

NELSON OSNZ MĀTĀTĀ FERNBIRD STUDY

Paul Fisher's presentation at the July meeting summarized the development, scope methodology and findings of this project over the last two years. It also once again highlighted the dedication, enthusiasm, commitment and sheer hard work that Paul (and a regular band of helpers) have thrown at this. No attempt to report on the full presentation is made in this newsletter, but with Paul's permission here are a few key points and highlights.

Study Aims

- To describe the distribution, productivity and survival of Fernbirds from surveys and using colour banding to mark individuals.
- To describe the Fernbird moult sequence and other morphometrics to confidently age and sex birds, to estimate the breeding population and productivity

Longer term goals

- Retrap and resight colour banded birds each year
- Track birds over five+ years (e.g., dispersal, longevity pair bonds, survival)
- Monitor the distribution of banded/Fernbird sightings across the region
- NCC / community trapping of mammal predators and restoration planting

Survey methods

- Walk through territory surveys early and late breeding season to map birds/territories and density/ha
- Mist net and colour band individual birds
- Recces to locate Fernbird territories and suitable mist net sites
- Record calls and play back to tape lure

Number of birds banded

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| ▪ Wakapuaka Flats (main study area) | 64 |
| ▪ Marahau & Otuwheru | 26 |
| ▪ Paremata Flats | 4 |
| ▪ Golden Bay | 5 |

Total =99 Almost a hundred!



CP size incoloy metal band (3.3mm ID, oval)

Butt jointed plastic bands (3.5mm) soldered – five colours

NELSON - BIRDS NEW ZEALAND/OSNZ - FERNBIRD STUDY

Example of banding to show how individual birds can be identified using colour and position of bands.



Wakapuaka Flats, Nelson Haven

Distribution of Fernbird breeding territories 2021/2022
 Baseline survey before predator trapping on the Flats

Legend

~21 Fernbird breeding territories
13 Fernbird pairs from banding Aug 2021-May 2022

Fernbird locations (wetland counts)
 Areas with fernbird habitat not surveyed

NELSON - BIRDS NEW ZEALAND/OSNZ - FERNBIRD STUDY

The 'main' study area at Wakapuaka showing distribution of breeding pairs and territories prior to the 2022 floods.



The study area above shown during the August 2022 flood. Not surprisingly this event has had a major impact on the fernbird population with current numbers approximately half the pre flood level.

Another aspect of Paul's study has been the moulting sequence in fernbirds. This can be aberrant compared to your average passerine where moulting of flight feathers takes place on an annual basis, when primaries are replaced starting at the 1st (inside) primary and sequentially working through to the 10th on the outside of the wing with secondaries showing a similar pattern. Fernbirds show several variations on this pattern one of which (eccentric juvenile moult) is illustrated below

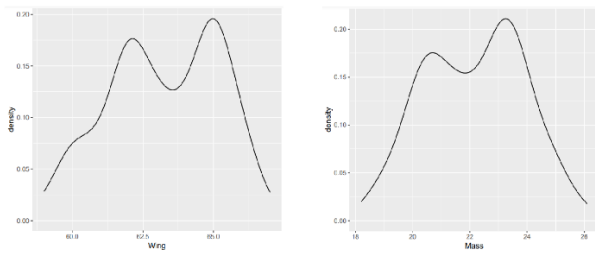


ECCENTRIC MOULT - INNER JUVENILE PRIMARIES, SECONDARIES & PRIMARY COVERTS RETAINED

Understanding moulting patterns may help accurately determine the age of the bird. There is also the interesting question as to whether the aberrant moulting patterns are a response to feather wear and abrasion that the fernbird

Further aspects of the study have investigated prevalence of female brood patches, persistence of tongue spots in juveniles and biometric methods of determining the sex of the bird.

Sexing adult fernbirds using morphometrics – wing length (mm) and mass (g), n=88, 143



Both wing length and body mass measurements of captured birds show two 'peaks' corresponding to female (first peak) and male members of the population. While this does not give certainty as there is some overlap, it is possible to use these measurements to ascertain gender with reasonable probability.

It's not over yet and Paul concluded his talk with the path forward for the remainder of this year and next.

2023/24 Build on knowledge – recovery of Fernbirds at Wakapuaka Flats?

- Tools to be more confident how to age and sex Fernbirds to describe the population and productivity at sites – more to learn!
- Banding and surveys at more sites to increase sample size, recaptures and resightings and continue studying moult
- Opportunities for collaboration with NCC and other organisations to restore Fernbird habitat and provide more security

Acknowledgements: Small grants for equipment from NCC, OSNZ volunteers

AND FINALLY

Please keep (well actually start) those newsletter items coming in: Observations, photos, birdy anecdotes, bird table designs, trip reports, book reviews, anything birds. Go on -be brave! Paul Bennett

thebraveryofbeingoutofrange@gmail.com