

KUAKA



Newsletter of South Auckland Branch, Birds New Zealand
Te Kahui Matai Manu o Aotearoa

July - 2023

Welcome to the July issue of Kuaka, and to cheer you up despite the lousy weather, I can point out that spring is on its way – the kahu/harriers are calling and doing their aerial acrobatics here in rural Karaka and the neighbour's white magnolias are in full fabulous flower. Blackbirds/manu pango have been observed picking and discarding potential nesting material and the taringi/starlings are guarding their nest boxes with zeal.

Today we share some insights into the East Asian-Australasian flyway, spoonbill sandpipers, our ebird map, and bird poetry, amongst other things. Attached to this email are: interesting thoughts on *"The Bizarre Bird That's Breaking the Tree of Life - Darwin thought that family trees could explain evolution. The hoatzin suggests otherwise"*. Also attached are some articles on bird accents.

We are still looking for a 'local correspondent' from amongst our members in Whitianga, Thames and Coromandel, to let us know what is happening up the Coromandel. It would be equally good to hear from our members in Mangere Bridge, Howick, Pokeno and Tuakau.

For all members we would love to share your experiences /photos etc. in forthcoming newsletters - so don't be shy; send them in to Sue or myself.

SPEAKER

Our planned speaker was unable to attend tonight due to illness. We wish Mick all the best in his recovery.

Mick's absence meant we had to entertain ourselves which we did by considering the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) and the spoon billed sandpiper in particular. Critically endangered, this petite wader breeds on the coasts of the Bering Sea and winters in SE Asia. It feeds by moving its head from side-to-side, similar to its namesake the kotuku ngutu papa/royal spoonbill. By 2000 the breeding population was estimated at 350-500. The main threats are habitat loss, and trapping on the wintering grounds.



saving the
spoon-billed sandpiper

Action is underway throughout the flyway by a wide range of people and organisations working in partnership to halt the decline.

Spoon-billed sandpiper migration is now being tracked with satellite tags.

A captive population has been established as a safe-guard against extinction and headstarting efforts have released over 180 birds. The EAAFP Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force, working with villagers in Myanmar and Bangladesh, is easing the pressure of trapping. Advocacy work is raising the profile of the critically

important intertidal wetlands in the Yellow Sea and awareness raising activities are introducing this incredible bird to children in the flyway.

There are now encouraging signs that conservation measures are reducing the impacts of some threats and bolstering the population but there is also the continuation of some key threats and the emergence of new ones. There remains a great deal of work to do. The most important and challenging aspect of which is maintaining and protecting habitat at key sites, particularly stopover sites in the Yellow Sea. Key stopover sites remain unknown, and only a portion of the population can be found during breeding and wintering seasons indicating there are also breeding and wintering sites yet to be found.

The spoon-billed sandpiper conservation breeding programme is a collaboration between WWT, Birds Russia, Moscow Zoo and the RSPB working with the BTO, BirdLife International, ArcCona and the Spoon-billed Sandpiper Task Force. Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent breakdown in international relations means this project is on hold at present.



Back to Aotearoa/New Zealand

SIGHTINGS

- No spoonbilled sandpipers have been spotted but kotuku ngutu papa/royal spoonbill were seen near the drag strip at Meremere
- Tony W reported that 60+ Canada geese/kuihi were spotted cavorting across Ardmore Airfield but they moved on before causing any problems for aircraft
- The whiskered tern is still at Miranda
- Twenty-two dabchicks/weweia are present at Miranda
- A black fronted dotterel/tuturiwhatu was spotted at Miranda last week along with 2500/3000 wrybill/ngutuparore and a 'handful' of godwits/kuaka
- Twenty-two cockatoo were spotted near Waitawa Regional Park recently – possibly a flock from the Waitakere's

On the winter wader census David counted the following manu at Kidds. 800 wrybill/ngutuparore, 400 banded dotterel/tuturiwhatu, 30 turnstone, 50 huahou/knot, 800 godwit (including HSN), several NZ dotterel/tuturiwhatu, and several gannet/takapu fishing in the harbour (bit early in the year for the gannets).

DISCUSSION

Adrian pointed out that, as with most of the BirdsNZ branches, our records of where to count birds for the winter and summer wader censuses have not been updated for many years. Paper maps and instructions are decaying and a lot of up-to-date information is in people's heads and not recorded anywhere. He has devised a project to computerise this data and make it available to branches on-line. In this way the maps/instructions can be easily tweaked to take into account, for example, the building of housing estates

on prime SIPO resting areas (Pararekau/(Lees) Island, Papakura) or the erosion of once prime viewing sites by sea level rise and increased storminess.

It was pointed out that information concerning roosting and feeding sites is becoming important when submitting to Council as the development of the remaining rural land in the Auckland region continues apace.


Copies of the current maps were handed around and we endeavoured to update them based on our recent census outings. Adrian now has the task of interpreting everyone's cryptic comments, and terrible handwriting, to produce the new maps that we all look forward to seeing.

PROGRAMME FOR 2023

Monthly Meetings: held on the second Tuesday of each month, at the Papakura Croquet Club, 1 Chapel Street Papakura. Meetings start at 7:30. Visitors welcome. \$3.00 donation to cover costs please

Aug 8	Lenny van Heugten	Hunua Kokako. Our speaker will have copies of her new book for sale (\$30) so please bring some cash along
Sept 12	Josie Galbraith	Aliens in our City
Oct 10	TBA	
Nov 14	Daniel Thomas	Seabird fossils in Taranaki (recommended by the Kuaka editor)
Dec	Christmas BBQ – watch this space, details to come	



 **Dave Arnold Wildlife Photography**
is in Gold Coast, QLD, Australia.
Jun 29 · 🌐

Revisiting old photos- and saw this one - and could resist reposting - possibly my most popular photo I have ever posted, of the tail feather pulling Rainbow Lorikeet - this really does reflect their mischievous personality :)

SOME INTERESTING NUMBERS from the New Scientist in 2021

Earth is home to around 50 billion wild birds (that's around six wild birds for every human) according to a new global estimate, but most species are very rare and only a handful number in the billions.

Just four undomesticated species are in the club of those with a billion-plus individuals with the house sparrow the most numerous, followed by European starlings, ring-billed gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) and barn swallows. By contrast 1180 species number fewer than 5000 birds each.

One of the takeaways is that mother nature loves rare species. It's what some refer to as hyper dominance, which has been found in Amazonia tree flora and other plant groups. It's not terribly surprising but its good to have the data says Corey Callaghan of the University of NSW who led the research. He calculated this figure using data from ebird.

BIRD NEWS FROM THE COROMANDEL

A bit of trawling on the internet has ascertained the following tit-bits.

Moehau Environment Group (MEG): Annemieke Kregting (a birdsNZ member) "attracted a stellar crowd of local bird lovers [in June] with her presentation on bird first aid". Annemieke founded Kuaotuna Bird Rescue, now called Coromandel Native Birds, and has an extensive history and passion for bird rehabilitation.



Formed in 2000 Moehau Environment Group is a non-profit community organisation dedicated to the protection and enhancement of the natural environment of the Northern Coromandel Peninsula. They have 100+ members and partner closely with over 430 landowners, other community conservation groups, DOC, Waikato Regional Council, local schools and Iwi to achieve coordinated pest control in the Northern Coromandel. They work over 13,000 hectares and this has allowed for the recovery of many including dramatic turnarounds for kiwi, koroatito/fern bird, matuku hurepo/bittern, kaka, and puweto/spotless crane. The hard work of volunteers and members has allowed for the successful reintroduction of the toutouwai /Nth Is Robin and pateke, with both species now successfully breeding in the area.

The Coromandel community are proud to say that "where we live is Kiwi Country". They claim this title because the northern part of the Coromandel Peninsula has the largest predator-controlled kiwi habitat on the mainland. One example of the protected locations MEG created is the Kiwi Sanctuary, a large stoat trapping network which begun in 2005. There were only 70 kiwi estimated within the Sanctuary at its inception and by 2022 MEG found that kiwi numbers have increased by 300%.

The Coromandel Kiwi Project is protecting 1300ha of habitat above Coromandel town, dramatically increasing the chances of Coromandel residents hearing kiwi calls from their backyard. The aim of the Project is to provide protection for young kiwi looking to make a home in the bush above Coromandel Town. The children from Coromandel Area School have already built and helped install over 200 stoat traps and even more rat traps

Well done guys, keep up the good work.

Karaka bird hide: From the PlacesNZ website: “the Firth of Thames is an important area for shorebirds and a Ramsar site. There is a chance to see the birds by walking through the mangroves on a board walk to the Karaka Bird Hide off Brown St, Thames”.

Looks warm and cosy from the photos. Will check it out when in Thames next.

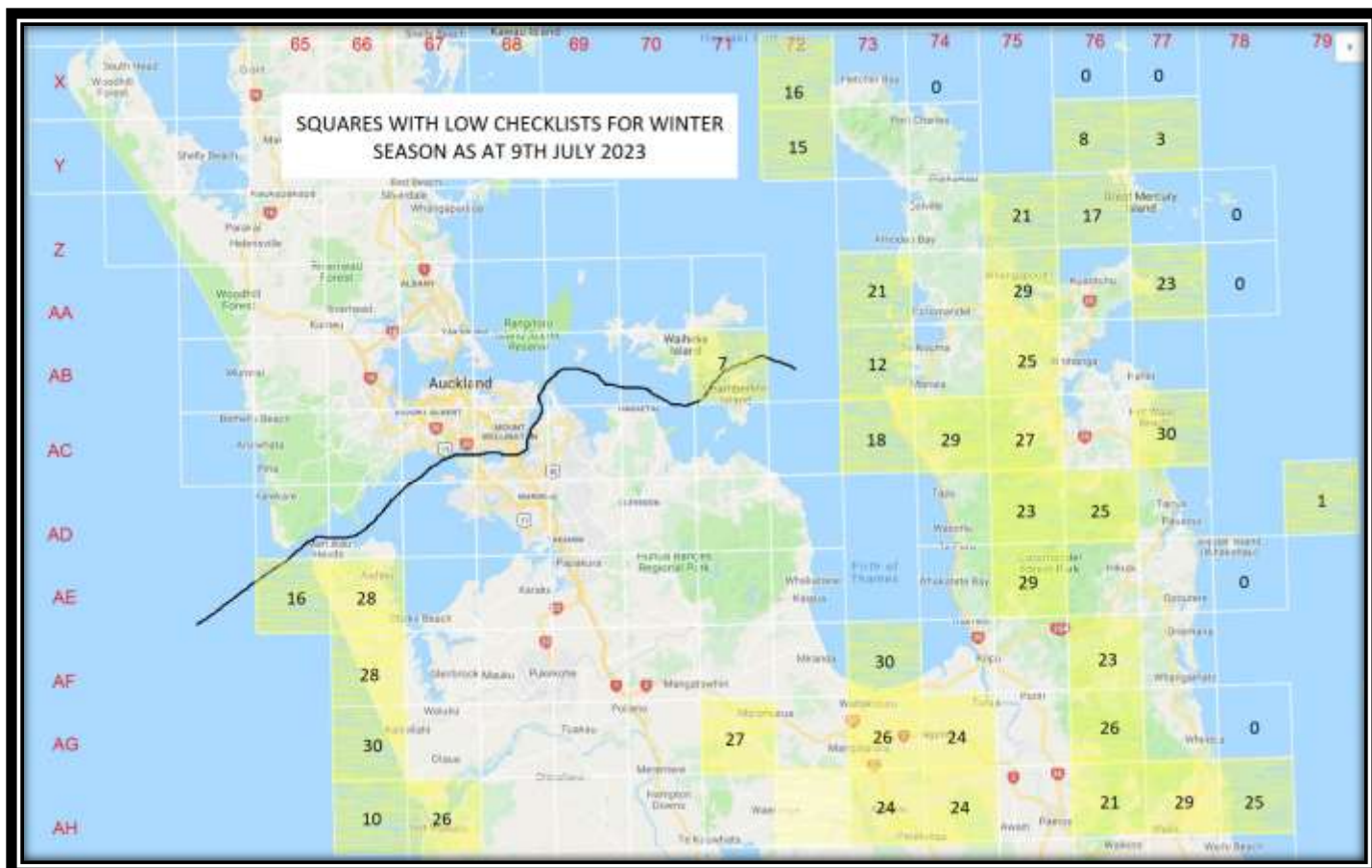


ATLAS REPORT JULY 2023

We are about halfway through the last winter season for the atlas project, and progress is steady, despite the miserable weather we've been having. The 'squares with low checklist numbers' map shows yellow squares which have had 1-30 checklists, and those with no checklists.

I am hoping to do some of the Coromandel squares at the end of this month and will also cover the Hauraki Plains squares. A few of the squares have reasonably high numbers of species, despite the lower number of checklists.

Realistically, we are not going to get to the squares with no checklists, due to their inaccessibility. These squares are mostly filled with sea with one or two small islands, rock stacks or headlands. Seabirds would of course be present, but we probably wouldn't see much on the small patches of land. The exception is Slipper Island (square AE78), close to Pauanui, so I will investigate the possibility of organising a boat trip over there sometime during the spring or summer. There are also quite a few islands in the Coromandel Harbour (squares AA73 and AB73), so another boat trip around those would help to boost the number of checklists and species for those squares.



Remember to look out for spoonbills over the next month or so, and send me the following details of those or any other interesting birds: Exact location of sighting, Date, Start Time, duration of count, Species, Number of birds seen

Happy Birding and keep warm, Sue



Parking Warden spotted near Kaiua

BIRDS NZ NATION-WIDE 2024 ROYAL SPOONBILL CENSUS + COLONY AND NEST COUNT

Birds NZ has been following the increase in population and breeding of kotuku ngutu papa in NZ since the late 70s. The last census was in 2012. Birds NZ regions will collectively do another census, colony and nest count in 2024.

In preparation for this census it is suggested you look for where the winter flocks of spoonbill are roosting in your area - they may not roost with waders, instead having their own favourite spots which we need to be familiar with before the actual census. Also you will get some idea of what will be required in your area to do the survey; perhaps boats for access, etc.

This map shows locations where royal spoonbill/kotuku ngutu papa have been recorded in our region at any time of the year. Please look out for spoonbills gathering and roosting over the next few months.



Another shot of that very handsome Tuturiwhatu from Orua Bay



BIRD POETRY

I was not overwhelmed by the response to my request over the past couple of months for bird related poems. Be that as it may I will share a couple of poems with you.

Garden Bird Survey Week

Got enough sparrows, doves, chaffinches
marauder mynas rattling in the trees
thank you, no more seed for you this week
since it's back to nuisance pukeko
digging holes close to the house
for kikuyu pith, with so much cheek
I shriek that throwing oranges at them does not work.
I'm doing the garden bird survey which I cannot shirk.
I've enticed silvereyes with cut oranges
scored five, still wish for goldfinches.
Rosellas did fly by, a sparky pair
while I fed pet-roll to my male magpie,
but come kotare, you must be counted
tui, heron, plover please, no-one to be left out.
Not much power by citizen science in one hour
to know what's there, absurd for a ranging bird.

(From a "subscriber living outside your region" - thanks Julie)

This next one was written by James Northcote (1746-1831). Fable XXXVI from his '*Fables, Original and Selected*' refers to the flight of the skylark thus:

Aspiring bird, in thee I find
An emblem of the youthful mind,
Whose earliest voice, like thine is given
To notes of joy that mount to heaven;
But fetter'd by the toils of life,
Its sordid cares, its bitter strife,
It feels its noble efforts vain,
And sadly, sinks to earth again.

More bird poetry next month!

SOUTH AUCKLAND MATUKU HUREPO

Last month we brought to your attention two young bittern/matuku hurepo that had been taken into care by Auckland Zoo after being found in an emaciated state in South Auckland. I thought you might be interested in an up-date on their progress.

After six weeks care, the young female in the photos below gained weight from 468gm to a healthy 950+ gms. She has been released into the wetland habitat at Lake Rotokawau on the Poutu peninsula, Kaipara Harbour. She now has satellite tracking device attached and has had a name bestowed – Te Awanui (the Waikato R near Pukekohe was called Te Awanui O Taikehu (the river of Taikehu).

“Matuku-hūrepo appear to travel through a greater wetland that is shared between Waikato, Auckland and Northland. Food availability and accessibility has become a growing issue for them,” says Harry Caley, Wetlands Bird Science Advisor, DOC. “If a young bird, like this individual, starts its independent life with limited foraging success, it then struggles to find better places to find food as flying to search for new areas is expensive energy wise. It is a cascade of unfortunate events. “We’re very hopeful that with its new-gained strength and with the support of the rich surrounds, this young female will become a successful parent in the years ahead,” says Harry.

Unfortunately, the second manu died within a few days of being taken into care.

Interestingly Karen Wilson of Te Ākitai Waiohū say that the iwi recognises the significance between these manu/birds and the two maunga/hills of Matukutūreia/McLaughlans Hill and Matukutūruru/Wiri Mountain, known together as Ngā Matukurua. One of these maunga is known as ‘standing and watchful’ (Matukutūreia), the other ‘restful’ (Matukutūruru) – mimicking these two birds,” says Ms Wilson.

You may be unaware that there is a citizen science project currently underway whereby DOC is trying to locate matuku hurepo resting, feeding, and hopefully, breeding sites. If you hear a bittern at any time, let your local DOC office know. Make sure you let us know too, and enter your sighting onto eBird!





PREDATORFREENZ.ORG

Unseen threat: sanctuary kiwi exposed to parasitic disease from cat scat

A recent study has found high exposure rate...



Karamea Wild

Jun 22 · 🌐

You know the pickings must be good when three of our largest predators are hanging out in the same spot.....



I.STUFF.CO.NZ

Taranaki fossils linked to Kororā, the smallest living penguin

A new species of fossil penguin discovered I...

Photo: Johanna Abert



Beate Schwippert Wildlife Photography

May 29 · 🌐

Perfect click 🐝🐝



RNZ.CO.NZ

Positive emotions in animals

Rats giggle. Dogs wag their tail. How do othe...

Newsletter of South Auckland Branch, Birds New Zealand/Te Kahui Matai Manu o Aotearoa

Editor: Wendy Goad

Regional Representative: Sue Frostick. 09 2672495 suefro@xtra.co.nz

www.osnz.org.nz

Facebook @birdsnzsa