

KUAKA



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

August – 2023

Hello Kuaka readers,

There are 12 pages of reading pleasure for you this month. We begin with a review of the presentation on the Hunua kokako, followed by the Atlas Report, sightings around our rohe, some more on birds and plastic, and a warning about using ebird to record sightings of rare (and valuable) manu overseas.

There are two documents attached to this email. The first is the New Zealand Penguin Initiative newsletter for July 2023. The second is a series of maps showing locations of the cryptic species in our rohe.

Happy reading.

SPEAKER



Lenny van Heugten, Pest Control co-ordinator for *Friends of Te Wairoa* (an environmental group) joined us to talk about her research into the Hunua Kokako Recovery Group. Lenny spent 2.5 years documenting the amazing tales of the recovery of the kokako population. An incredible, century long, story from our own back yard with anecdotes of species decline to today's fabulous success story.

In the early 1900's kokako were so common in the Hunua ranges that it is recorded that school children threw stones at them as they walked to school!

A couple of decades later Ross McKenzie, so enamoured by the manu, wrote: *You might not see one, but better hurry up and make sure you hear at least one, before you die.* They do have a fabulous song.

In the 1950's it was noted that the population was dropping so Ross, together with Joe St Paul, set about documenting the breeding, nesting, diet and the like of the manu. In 1957 they estimated there were 250-300 individuals; in the 1970's the estimate was 60-70; 1988 40; 1993 ≤30, with only 5 pairs located – 4 of which were male/male (nationwide population at the time estimated at 400).

In 1994 the then ARC, in conjunction with DOC, established the Hunua Kokako Recovery project to try and protect the species in the Hunua's. With extensive and on-going predator control, undertaken primarily by volunteers, and (to avoid genetic bottlenecks) the translocation of a total of 65 individuals from elsewhere in the motu, the population in 2022 was 229 pairs and 9 singles. An awesome achievement.

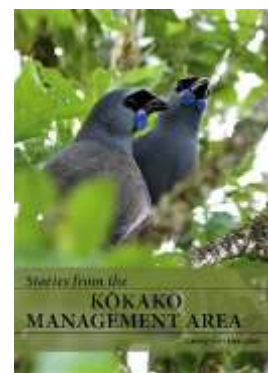
A similar sized population existed on Great Barrier in the 1990's but with no attempt made to protect and grow the numbers that population no longer exists.

2000ha in the ranges receive intensive predator control and critical to the ongoing success of the project have been 1080 drops undertaken in the control area every four years or so. The best breeding years with highest chick survival follow on immediately from the drop. Rats are generally back in the control area within six months.

Other species to benefit from the predator control, together with goat/deer/pig control, are longtail bats, Hochstetter frogs and native plants, including rare orchids.

Thank you, Lenny, for such a positive presentation.

If you would like to buy a copy of the book, they are \$35 and can be purchased from www.friendsoftheranges.co.nz All profits will be used to enhance the Hunua Ranges for generations of wildlife and recreational users for years to come.



SIGHTINGS

We had a range of sightings this month

- Tony W encountered a tui doing an excellent rendition of magpie song. Tui have also been known to mimic pikake/peacock calls.
- Cattle egret sightings recently included: 32 at Hoods Landing on the Waikato; 26 at Piako; 38 at Rangiriri
- A matuku moana/reef heron was spotted at Waikawau
- Also seen there was an orange-flagged torea/SIPO banded as an adult three years ago on the upper Rangitata
- Several kaka were spotted on the Coromandel along with several pipit
- At Waiomu three tara/white fronted terns, with bands, were seen – they were banded near Thames, 30 years ago
- At Tapu Tony H and David were able to read the band on a tarapuka/black billed gull (a white band with the number 289) it was banded as an adult 3 years ago on the Rakaia. The individual was seen at Thames last year. Is it breeding up here or in the Sth Is – please keep any eye out for this manu and report any sightings.
- The whiskered tern is still at Miranda, as is the glossy ibis
- Kereru have been spotted nesting and I understand some chicks are already with bird rescue
- Taringi/starlings have been reported nesting and spurwing plover chicks are out and about
- Kakianau/black swans are nesting and there has been a report of cygnets

If you spot a manu (dead or alive) with a band or flag, please do your utmost to read the numbers/letters on the band and take note of the arrangement and colours of bands and flags on which leg(s). Let Tony H and/or Adrian know and report your observations to the banding office at bandingoffice@doc.govt.nz

DISCUSSION

- David has been checking out kuruwheangi/shoveller numbers and reported that he has seen: zero at the Tuakau Oxidation Ponds; 75 at Clarks Bay, Sth Manukau Hbr; zero at Kidds; 250 at Taramaire; and that the flock on Lake Waikare is much smaller than usual. This leaves us wondering, have numbers declined or have the manu moved out early for breeding due to the relatively warm winter we have experienced to date.

- Following the positive presentation from our speaker, the tone of the meeting became much more subdued as we moved on to the topic of the **highly pathogenic avian influenza** H5N1 (bird flu) outbreak currently being experienced across the northern hemisphere, including Siberia and Washington State.

There is a concern that migratory manu on the East Asian/Pacific flyway could carry the virus with them although those that contract the virus will die very quickly and hopefully it will not make its way to OZ, the Pacific Is, or NZ. However, the kuaka/godwits who fly direct to NZ could, possibly, arrive here (or a Pacific Is) before they expire.

The www.uk.gov website reports that this year's avian influenza outbreak has been the largest and longest ever on record in the UK and in many parts of Europe, with infections continuing beyond the normal winter period and now hitting wild birds and breeding colonies of seabirds that are not typically affected. Large mortalities of rare seabirds, from suspected avian influenza, have been reported at iconic sites such as Farne Islands, which is home to guillemots, puffins, and Arctic tern, and Coquet Island where the UK's only breeding population of Roseate tern resides. The latest reports (9/8/23) suggest that gulls, terns, and geese seem to be bearing the brunt of the virus.

Symptoms of the disease that can be observed in manu: depression, lack of reaction to others, unusual behaviour, impaired movement, shortness of breath, coughing, sneezing, nasal discharge.

We should emphasize that the risk of HPAI transmitted to humans is very low however, people should not touch dead birds with bare hands. Note, that once in water, the virus can persist for up to one month, and at low temperatures even longer meaning another manu, animal, or human, in the water can be at risk of contracting the virus.

If you find a manu, dead or alive, that causes you concern contact Biosecurity NZ on 0800 80996



Council have installed "I need my space!" signs at Orua Bay

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

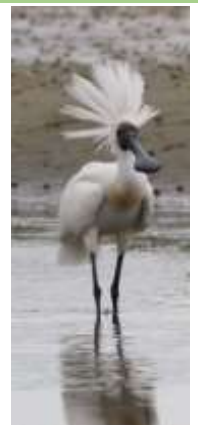
Aug 27	Let Sue know if you are interested in a boat trip to Coromandel Hbr on Nov 11	
Sept 12	Josie Galbraith	Aliens in our City
Sept 30	Field trip looking for cryptics	Mangatawhiri Wetlands
Oct 10	Kamolphat Atsawawaranunt	Using genomic tools to understand the introduction and expansion of the myna in Aotearoa
Oct 30	Zoom meeting	Birds Auckland are hosting a presentation by Ilse Corkery of the NZ Fairy Tern Recovery project. We will email you the link when we receive it.
Nov 14	Daniel Thomas	Seabird fossils in Taranaki (recommended by the Kuaka editor)
Nov 11	Proposed boat trip to Coromandel Hbr	register your interest with Sue by Aug 27
Nov 19	Firth of Thames Wader Census – high tide 12.43pm	
Nov 26	Manukau Wader Census – high tide 10.32am	
Dec 2	Christmas BBQ	Ian & Anna are kindly hosting us this year - details TBA

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

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 and colony and nest count in 2024.

In preparation for this census I am suggesting that during your atlasing and the up-coming winter wader count that you look for where your winter flocks of kotuku ngutu papa 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.

Please look out for spoonbills gathering and roosting over the next few months.



ATLAS REPORT Aug 2023

We are now into the last month of the final winter season for the atlas project. I managed to boost the number of checklists in 13 of the Coromandel squares recently, and aim to get to the southern end of Karioitahi Beach, and a couple of Hauraki Plains squares before the end of the month.

I haven't included a progress map for the atlas this month, but instead attached to this email are maps comparing the locations for the following cryptic species between the 1999-2004 atlas and the current atlas - koroatito/fernbird; matuku hurepo/bittern; puweto/spotless crane; kotoreke/marsh crane. **If you are aware of any locations not shown on the maps but where they might be found, please let Sue know.**



It would be good to try and find more cryptics before the end of the atlas project, so I hope we can do a few field trips to suitable habitats. The first will be to the Mangatawhiri Wetlands, between Pokeno and Mercer, on 30th September. Fernbird and Bittern have been spotted here previously. Further details to follow.

I am currently planning a boat trip to the islands and headlands of the Coromandel Harbour (squares AA73 and AB73 – see map left). The proposed date is 11th November, but I need to know if we have enough people to fill a boat before I book a charter. If you are interested, please let me know by 27th August.

If you see or hear morepork on these cold winter nights, 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, Sue

THE NGUTUPARORE/WRYBILL

Your editor asked Chat GTP to create a poem about the ngutuparore/wrybill. This is what the AI came up with on its second attempt (let me know what you think).

*A bird so strange, with a bill askew,
It has its own place in the bird book too.*

*A wanderer, it travels from north to south,
But always returns to the place from which it came.*

*Its bill is curved, always to the right,
It uses it to find food in the night.*

*It eats insects and worms, small fish too,
It's a very special bird, of which there is no doubt,*

*The Wrybill is a New Zealand treasure,
It's a symbol of our land and our weather.*

*So let's protect it, and help it to thrive,
The wrybill is a bird that deserves to survive.*



NOTE OF CAUTION when using ebird!

BALI MYNAH/STARLING -ALMOST POACHED TO EXTINCTION IN THE WILD. (Paul Bennett, Birds NZ, Nelson)



Paul was in Bali at the end of May on a short non-birding holiday. However, it would have been rude to visit such a beautiful island without at least trying to see all the possible endemics. He managed to find most of the species, however, in the process he 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/starling (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 appears to have made poaching less financially desirable. Talking to local birders Paul was implored ***not to record specific locations of sightings on E-bird*** as this serves as a ***prime source of information to trappers***. Paul says don't get him wrong, he is 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!

I can back up what Paul says about poaching on Bali having been on the hunt for a Bali myna/starling myself and encountered a poacher with what he said was a "butterfly" net and playing bird calls with his phone!



SERVICE

Another poem from the 'friendly subscriber who lives outside our region'

*I see them praying for my blessing
from the branches I have planted.*

*They wait for me to come
and pick up every crumb.*

*Hello, I call. My, you're quick.
Little darlings. Hello, I call.*

*I am minister to a congregation of sparrows,
dispensing communion.*

*Mynas, blackbirds, finches,
also come to the meeting.*

*The god of the garden comes through me.
No fighting, there is plenty.*

*Of course, here is their home.
The church feeds its flock,
the house its family,
there are fruit, water, seeds, and grain.*

*Or maybe this is more like a hotel
and I'm just the room service,
a maid making manifest their feast,
giving the band their perquisites again.*



Interested in becoming
involved in the

Motuihe Project?

We're looking for volunteers to be part of small teams to take care of different projects on Motuihe Island including:

- Our Dotterels
- Our Tuatara
- Our wetland birds
- Track maintenance



If you're interested in finding out more, please email Operations@motuihe.org.nz
www.motuihe.org.nz

Full training and support will be provided.

MORE ABOUT BIRDS AND PLASTICS

HUMAN-MADE MATERIALS IN NESTS CAN BRING BOTH RISKS AND BENEFIT FOR BIRDS

July 9, 2023. Bangor University

We all discard a huge amount of plastic and other human-made materials into the environment, and these are often picked up by birds. New research has shown that 176 bird species around the world are now known to include a wide range of anthropogenic materials in their nests. This material found in birds' nests can be both beneficial and harmful say researchers.

All over the world, birds are using our left-over or discarded materials. Seabirds in Australia incorporate fishing nets into their nests, ospreys in North America include baler twine, birds living in cities in South America add cigarette butts, and common blackbirds in Europe pick up plastic bags to add to their nests.

This material found in birds' nests can be beneficial say researchers. For example, cigarette butts retain nicotine and other compounds that repel ectoparasites that attach themselves to nestling bird's skin and suck blood from them. Meanwhile, there are suggestions that harder human-made materials may help to provide structural support for birds' nests, while plastic films could help provide insulation and keep offspring warm. Despite such potential benefits, it is important to remember that such anthropogenic material can also be harmful to birds.

This research was published in a special issue of the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B* on "The evolutionary ecology of nests: a cross-taxon approach." The special issue was jointly organised by Mark Mainwaring, a Lecturer in Global Change Biology in the School of Natural Sciences at Bangor University. Mark Mainwaring said, "The special issue highlights that the nests of a wide range of taxa -- from birds to mammals to fish to reptiles -- allow them to adapt to human-induced pressures. Those pressures range from the inclusion of anthropogenic materials into their nests through to providing parents and offspring with a place to protect themselves from increasingly hot temperatures in a changing climate."

Anthropogenic materials sometimes harm birds. Parents and offspring sometimes become fatally entangled in baler twine. Meanwhile, offspring sometimes ingest anthropogenic material after mistaking it for natural prey items. Finally, the inclusion of colourful anthropogenic materials into nests attracts predators to those nests who then prey upon the eggs or nestlings. This means that we need to reduce the amount of plastic and other anthropogenic material that we discard.

The lead author of the study, Zuzanna Jagiełło who is based at the Poznań University of Life Sciences in Poland, added, "A wide variety of bird species included anthropogenic materials into their nests. This is worrying because it is becoming increasingly apparent that such materials can harm nestlings and even adult birds."

The second author of the study, Jim Reynolds, a researcher in the Centre for Ornithology at the University of Birmingham in the UK, remarked, "In a rapidly urbanizing world which we share with many different animal taxa, it is not surprising that birds use our discarded materials in their nests. Although much needs to be understood about how plastics, for example, impact birds, it is exciting that birds, through their high mobility and breeding biology, may prove to be potent bio-monitors of environmental anthropogenic material pollution."

The Pūkorokoro Shorebird Centre **Calendar** is one of the biggest selling items each year, raising money to support the Trust and its work.

For 2024 they are looking at highlighting NZ shorebirds and landscapes of Pūkorokoro and would love to hear from anyone who has images they would be willing to let them feature.

You can email them at admin@shorebirds.org.nz



-----MAKARORA FIELD CAMP FOR YOUNG BIRDERS-----

(13 - 18 years)

8 – 13 January 2024

Led by Aspiring Biodiversity Trust & Birds NZ
based at Makarora near the head of Lake Wanaka



Include this unique birding experience in your summer holidays!

Cost \$450 per person (possible bursaries)

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

Pretty Swallows twittering,
Are magic in the midst of spring;
Swiftly gliding in the skies.....
They are a light to wanton eyes!
Amanda.



"Swallow" Amanda Foote 1984

ARCTIC TERNS MAY NAVIGATE CLIMATE DANGERS

July 26, 2023, University of Exeter

Arctic terns -- which fly on the longest migrations of any animal on Earth -- may be able to navigate the dangers posed by climate change, new research suggests.

The birds live in near-perpetual daylight, breeding in the north of our planet and flying to Antarctica for the Southern Hemisphere summer, covering enough distance in their lifetime to travel to the moon three times. The new study, led by the University of Exeter and the [UK] Met Office, examined the likely impacts of climate change on arctic terns outside of the breeding season, investigating changes to prevailing winds, primary productivity (which affects food availability) at key sites visited by Arctic terns, and Antarctic sea ice.

While poorer foraging in the North Atlantic seems likely to pose a threat for them in the future, the study concluded that the overall effects of climate change for migrating terns should be minor. They are likely to be resilient due to living their lives over such vast areas. However, the researchers warn that multiple small effects may still harm this long-lived (up to 30 years) species -- and other species may be unable to escape local and regional changes. "Arctic terns rely on productive oceans for food, sea ice for rest and foraging, and prevailing winds during flight," said Dr Joanne Morten, from the University of Exeter.

"Although the Arctic tern is a species of 'least concern' globally on the IUCN Red List, breeding numbers are declining and can be challenging to monitor. Climate change is a massive threat to all seabirds. Our study looked at specific aspects of this. "So, while our findings suggest this species may be resilient, this is only part of a bigger picture for Arctic terns and many other species. "Meeting carbon emissions targets is vital to slow these projected end-of-century climatic changes and minimise extinction risk for all species."

The study used observations of ongoing climate change and multiple climate and Earth System Models to project changes by 2100. It examined the impacts of two emissions scenarios: "middle-of-the-road" and "fossil-fuelled development." The latter led to a projected decline of primary productivity (the base level of all food chains) in the North Atlantic -- a key feeding ground for millions of seabirds and other marine

animals. However, minimal changes to primary productivity were projected at three other key sites for Arctic terns: the Benguela Upwelling, the Subantarctic Indian Ocean and the Southern Ocean.

Meanwhile, the impact of likely Antarctic Sea ice decline on terns is uncertain, and the projections suggested small changes to prevailing winds would have "minimal impacts" on tern migration -- except in the Southern Ocean, where strengthening winds may force the birds to shift flight routes. The study's interdisciplinary approach began with a virtual Climate Data Challenge "hackathon" facilitated by the University of Bristol and the Met Office. This allowed ecologists to work with climate scientists, bringing together different skills and approaches.

The research team included the universities of Liverpool, Bristol, Washington, Oxford and Iceland. The paper, published in the journal *Global Change Biology* 2023, is entitled: "Global warming and Arctic terns: estimating climate change impacts on the world's longest migration."



Bittern Conservation - New Zealand

Aug 13, 2014 · 🌐

How to identify a bittern in flight, at distance, from the similarly sized and coloured Harrier

Identifying a bittern
in flight at distance



Under the shade of parental wings. See more: themindcircle.com/wildlife-photography/

Photo by Jaap van der Velden



Bornean Banded Pitta (*Hydrornis schwaneri*) by Kenneth Cheong.



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