

BIRDS NEW ZEALAND

Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa

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BIRDS

NEW ZEALAND

Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa

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We welcome advertising. Classified ads for members are at the editor's discretion. Articles/photos of birds in NZ or the South Pacific are welcome such as bird news, members' activities, birding sites, identifications, letters. Deadlines: 10th Feb, May, Aug & 1st Nov. Views expressed by contributors do not necessarily represent those of OSNZ (Inc) or the editor. When you're finished with this copy please pass it on to someone interested in NZ birds.

75th anniversary of Takahē rediscovery

20th November 2023 will mark the 75th anniversary of the rediscovery of the Takahē. On that date in 1948, 'Doc' Geoffrey Orbell led a team to Takahē Valley in the Murchison Mountains. After their successful search, he got photos of the birds, returning to Invercargill to report the news to the world. Guided by 'Doc' Orbell, ornithologists began field research there in January 1949, including Robert Falla, Director of the Dominion Museum (now Te Papa), John Sorenson, Baughan Wisely and Frank Woodrow. By 1953 there had been 10 Takahē expeditions there, which led to the publication of the first scientific papers on Takahē by Robert Falla, Charles Fleming, Graham Turbott and Louis Gurr in *Notornis*, the journal of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (now Birds New Zealand) in 1951: https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Notornis_4_5.pdf

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NEW ZEALAND WINE

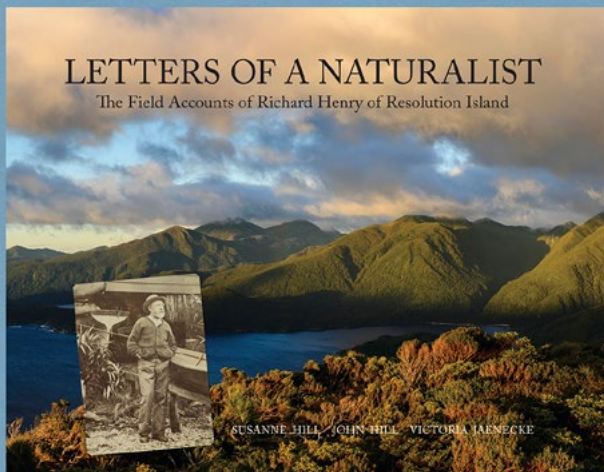
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COVER IMAGE

South Island Takahē, Orokonui Ecosanctuary, Dunedin.
Photo by Glenda Rees:

www.flickr.com/photos/nzsamphotofanatic/



LETTERS OF A NATURALIST

The Field Accounts of Richard Henry of Resolution Island

SUSANNE HILL | JOHN HILL | VICTORIA JAENECKE

A landmark collection of the written natural-history legacy of pioneer conservationist Richard Henry (1845-1929), champion of our flightless native birds and NZ's first wildlife ranger.

A handsome, high quality edition and richly illustrated throughout with landscape, bird and other wildlife photographs, historic images, drawings and maps etc, this book is a treasure trove of Henry's astute observations and descriptions of all the birds and marine life in Dusky Sound, and details his work and struggles to translocate endangered kākāpō and kiwi to offshore islands. Featuring a comprehensive introductory overview of Henry's life story, *Letters of a Naturalist* brings together his charming letters, field reports, natural history notes and early reminiscences, giving a colourful picture of this remarkable and important figure in NZ's conservation history.

Hardback with dust jacket, 470 pages. The book is a not-for-profit publication and all proceeds are being donated to bird recovery programmes.

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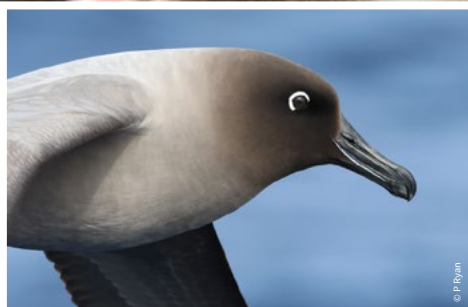
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Gouldian Finch
photographed
by Luke Paterson



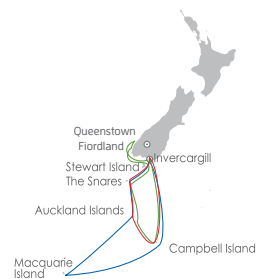
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From the President's Desk

Council Meeting

The Birds New Zealand Council met in New Plymouth in the lead up to the 2023 Conference. The meeting was delayed in part due to Natalie Forsdick and Mel Galbraith being stuck in transit in Auckland, but we still managed to complete our agenda and to have a full discussion. It bears repeating that as at May 2023 the Society's membership was 1,295 which is higher than it has ever been. This reflects the work that our Society's Regional Representatives, Councillors, Scheme Coordinators, other office holders and members put into making our Society an attractive and vibrant organisation. Thank you everyone.

We also had a very good face-to-face meeting with the assembled Regional Representatives. Now that we are using video conferencing a lot more, these face-to-face meetings are much rarer and consequently are much more valued. Ian Armitage updated Council and reported that we now have a functional and stable website. We also discussed the proposed changes to our Society's Constitution because of the new law covering Incorporated Societies. The recommended course of action will be to revoke the current constitution and replace it with a new one that meets the expectations of the new law. We also discussed an approach to international mailings with an intention to reduce our costs.

Fledgling Fund

One of the ways that our Society seeks to support younger members is through the Fledgling Fund. This is a mechanism where members can donate to a Fund which we reserve for supporting student and young members to attend the annual conference. Each grant covers the cost of the conference registration fee and attending the dinner. Currently we only have funds for one grant that can be awarded per student member per conference. Further donations to increase this fund will allow us to support more students in future years.

Historical Publications

For those of you who have been looking at the publications tab on our website you might have noticed the historical publications tab. I recommend that all members visit this page as the list of uploaded publications is growing. Historical Publications is a place on the website where books, booklets and other documents having historical significance to New Zealand ornithology are being made available to readers in a digital format. Historical Publications can be documents published by our Society in the past that are now out-of-print, or equally we are uploading significant publications on New Zealand ornithology that have been published by a third party.

I would like to acknowledge the support of William Brocklesby of the Department of Conservation who supported us getting a Creative Commons licence which enabled the uploading of Helen Oliver's 1968 publication: "*Annotated index to some early New Zealand bird literature compiled*", which was originally published by the NZ Department of Internal Affairs. As some have noted this is a very useful resource to gathering context for where the stories of our birds started. Authors, editors, or members who wish to propose documents for re-publishing on the Historical Publications page should contact Birds New Zealand Council with suggestions for editorial processes.

Data from counts

In his annual report, our Society's Coordinator for the National Wader Count Scheme noted that compiling records was delayed as some regions were slow in forwarding data. The nationwide wader counts that our Society undertakes are an important resource in understanding changes in numbers of domestic and

trans-equatorial wading birds. They are also used internationally. Can I ask members to ensure that the collation of counts is undertaken promptly and forwarded to Adrian Riegen with as little delay as is practical.

Branded stickers and cards

Conference participants in New Plymouth received a Birds New Zealand branded sticker and a 'Join us now' card. Regional Representatives also received a batch of both, which they will make available at future regional meetings. The stickers are for members to use as they wish. Please also consider giving one of the cards to someone you know who may be interested in joining Birds New Zealand.

2024 Conference

The 2023 Conference was wonderful and again I wish to thank Peter Fryer and his team for such a well-organised event. It was so good to catch up with you all and to hear the buzz during the breaks. I was revitalised and really enjoyed myself, and am looking forward to the 2024 Conference in Nelson.

BRUCE MCKINLAY, PRESIDENT



▣ Tara chick with Huhu Beetle (Most interesting prey winner/2023 Tara photo competition): Steve Wood.

2024 NZ Bird Conference Photo Competition

Conference attendees are invited to enter their photos into the 2024 Conference photo competition to be held in Nelson 1-3 June. There are four 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:** to publicise our Society's moult scheme and highlight the value of photographs (especially of birds in flight) - only birds that have a moult card brought to conference will qualify for entry. More info on bird moult and instructions of how to download moult cards are posted here: www.birdsnz.org.nz/schemes/moult-recording-scheme/
4. **A marked NZ bird:** to encourage photographers to report marked birds to the DOC Banding Office - only records submitted to the Banding Office and evidence brought to Conference will qualify for entry. More info about this is posted here: <https://birdbanding.doc.govt.nz/>

Photos must be printed colour or b/w in landscape or portrait format; only wild birds, no caged or restrained birds; they must have been taken within the 24 months prior to 1/6/24. No more than 2 photos per person may be entered in each category. Please bring the photos to the conference in person and submit them to the photo competition desk. No photos are to be sent to the organisers in Nelson via email. More details will be posted on the website.



▲ Taranaki Regional Representative Peter Fryer speaking at the opening of the conference: Michael Szabo.



▲ President Bruce McKinlay congratulates Elizabeth 'Biz' Bell on her Falla Award: Michael Szabo.



▲ 2023 award winners with Taranaki Regional Representative Peter Fryer and Society President Bruce McKinlay (back right), and Vice President Natalie Forsdick (standing at left) with the Society's mascot 'Orbell the Takahe'. Faunatech student prize sponsor Richard McMillan (top left). Student talk and poster award winners (right from Natalie Forsdick): Shannon Ritter, Kamya Patel, Taneal Gulliver. R.A. Falla Award winner Elizabeth Bell (centre in black T-Shirt). Meritorious Service Award winner Gwenda Pulham (green shawl) with Denise Poyner (red jacket) and Mary Thompson (blue jacket). Denise won a photo competition award and Mary/Otago was the RR/region with the third largest increase in membership. Best urban bird photo category winner Julie Paice is 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. Michael Szabo.

2023 NZ Bird Conference & AGM

Birds New Zealand's annual conference and AGM was held in New Plymouth, 3-5 June. About 200 members gathered to see high-quality scientific presentations, discuss birds and ornithology, and catch up with friends. The plenary talks were given by Dan Burgin on the last year of the NZ Bird Atlas project and Deidre Koolen-Bourke on reforming the Wildlife Act. The 40 presentations covered diverse subjects from bird conservation monitoring, restoring bird populations, the tracking of bird migrations, and the impacts of climate change and plastics pollution, to automated acoustic monitoring, conservation genomics, bird physiology, pest control and much more: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2023-NZ-Bird-Conference-Programme-and-Abstracts.pdf>

Colin Miskelly's presentation on how the Morning Report bird call helped reveal where Grey-backed Storm Petrels probably breed in Fiordland proved newsworthy, prompting an RNZ news report. Winners of the Tara photo competition were announced by Edin Whitehead, including Steve Wood (most interesting prey item - tern with Huhu Beetle), Nick Beckwith (most interesting portfolio), and Roger Smith (portfolio runner-up).

At the AGM the Society's President Bruce McKinlay presented a Robert Falla Memorial Award to Elizabeth 'Biz' Bell for her distinguished service to the Society, including 13 years as Secretary of the Records Appraisal Committee and 30 years of Black Petrel research and conservation (see page 15). He also presented a Meritorious Service Award to Gwenda Pulham and several *Notornis* and Conference awards to the following: Peter Jahn (*Notornis* Student Author Award Best paper by a student published in 2022 - *Post-translocation movements and ranging behaviour of roroa (great spotted kiwi) Apteryx maxima*); Alison Johnston (*Notornis* New Author Award Best paper by a new author published in 2022 - *When the lonely goose? Implications of a revised history of the lake and its surrounding vegetation for a radiocarbon age for the only South Island goose *Cnemioernis calcitrans* from the Pyramid Valley lake bed deposit New Zealand*); Kamya Patel (*Life in Plastic, it's not Fantastic*) and Pascale Lubbe (*Bird distributions through the ages: New Zealand birds respond*

to changing climatic condition) - joint winners of the Conference Student Talk Award for the best student oral presentation; Manaia Pearmain-Fenton (Best student conference poster - *Dispersal patterns and breeding success of two South Island robin/kakarui populations*); and Shannon Ritter, Keegan Miskimmin, Lydia Titterton (Conference People's Poster Choice Award for best poster presented - *The impact of eradication aimed predator control on urban native birds*).

Two student members were sponsored to attend through the Society's Fledgling Fund: Katie Vanderstok and Ana Menzies. Thanks to Faunatech, Toi Toi Wines, and Potton & Burton for donating prizes. Abstracts for the presentations are online here: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2023-NZ-Bird-Conference-Programme-and-Abstracts.pdf>

Minutes of the 2023 AGM are included in this issue (see page 14) and more conference photos are posted online here: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/other-events/past-conferences-and-abstracts/conference-photos/>

A presentation by Bruce Clarkson prior to the formal dinner focused on "The state of biodiversity in Taranaki". Three field trips were organised the following day to visit Lake Rotokare Reserve, Lake Mangamahoe and Pukekura Park, while some participants car-pooled to add checklists to some under-reported Atlas squares. Lastly, the President announced that the 2024 conference and AGM will be in Nelson (1-3 June).

Giving the Gift of Birds at Christmas

Are you looking for a Christmas gift to give? You can gift someone a 2024 Birds New Zealand subscription for just \$1.50 a week to help foster a lifetime appreciation of birds (only 75 cents per week for students). Please send an email to membership@birdsngz.org.nz and we will send you the Gift Voucher, or visit our website for more details:

<https://www.birdsngz.org.nz/membership/donate/gift-a-membership/>

Falla Memorial Award, A.T. Edgar Junior Award & Meritorious Service Awards

Nominations are called for these awards and should be with the Birds New Zealand Secretary (secretary@birdsngz.org.nz) or (P.O. Box 834, Nelson, 7040) by 31st December 2023.

Nominations should be on the standard forms which can be found on the website here birdsngz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Awards-Guidelines.pdf or obtained from your regional representative (RR) or the Society's Secretary. The Awards Committee will consider all nominations and its recommendations will be forwarded to Council for consideration at its summer meeting. More information on OSNZ award procedures is available from your RR, the Society's Secretary, or the website: birdsngz.org.nz/research/#awards

Birds of the Nelson region and where to find them

Over 30 years ago Birds New Zealand assisted the Nelson Branch to produce a guide to bird watching in the region. This modest publication has served well but the region is keen to produce a new updated version that is more comprehensive and that can review the changes that have occurred since. A stalwart of the branch, Peter Field, has picked up the challenge and a soft copy is now out for local review. A grant of \$2,000 from Birds New Zealand's 2023 Projects Assistance Fund should ensure that hard copies are available for attendees at our 2024 annual conference to be held in Nelson (1-3 June). It is possible that assistance from local authorities and other conservation organisations may further reduce the cost.

PETER GAZE

Making a donation

We are working to ensure a better future for birds, but we also need your help. We are a registered charity (CC 41020) which means tax credits are available for donations made in NZ in the following ways:

* Deposit funds into our bank account: 02-0290-0164715-00

* Make a credit card payment online: <https://www.birdsngz.org.nz/membership/donate/make-a-donation/#form/Donation>

Leaving a Gift in your will

Leaving a Gift to Birds New Zealand in your will makes a real difference. All funds we receive go to our Projects Assistance Fund so you can be confident your Gift will have a real impact. We suggest you consult your solicitor, Guardian Trust, or Public Trust office for advice on drawing up your will. The two options we offer are:

* *Specific Legacy*: Leaving a specific amount of money, shares, bonds, items, or a nominated Gift to Birds New Zealand, or

* *Residual Legacy*: Leaving a Gift of all or part of your net estate (what remains after all taxes, specific gifts to family and friends, and the cost of administering the estate have been paid). This should be expressed as a percentage or share of your estate. If you would like to discuss either option, please contact our Executive Officer Ingrid Hutzler: eo@birdsngz.org.nz

Call for Nominations for Council

As raised with members at the AGM in New Plymouth, Council has two vacancies which I would like to fill. We have been successful in securing an expression of interest for Society Secretary. However, we still have a vacancy on Council which needs filling. To ensure continuity, members who wish to join Council will be co-opted to Council until the AGM in Nelson next year. Being a Councillor is an opportunity to provide leadership of the Society in all our activities. If you are interested in the Society and its future, and being part of the next phase of the Society's development, then please consider getting in contact with me on 027 3891477 or a Council member to understand more about what it involves.

PRESIDENT, BRUCE MCKINLAY

New Members

We warmly welcome the following: Inka Pleiss; Aimee Hoeborgs; Deidre Koolen-Bourke; Liz Duhs; Murray Wilson (Auckland); LJ Gray; Hamish Dean (Bay of Plenty); Liza Jackson; Mark Belton; Aimee van der Reis; Matt Rose; Sharon Heatherbell; Nadine Campbell (Canterbury); Bianca Maddox (Far North); Jacqueline Y. Carr; Emma Scheltema; Liam Urquhart; Charlotte Andrew; Tori Turner (Manawatu); David Arthur Barker; Julie Buunk (Marlborough); Robin Jones; Petra Meinsma; Cid Wilkie; Timothy Lole; Graham Ussher; Charlotte Crottaz (Nelson); Amandine Sabadel; Eileen Bray; Brian Hyland; Susan Marsh (Otago); Christine Matthews (South Auckland); Allison Davis; Charmin Dahl; Nina Menegatti Zink; Gwylam MacMillan Armstrong; Mahe Braaksma; Ianthe MacMillan Armstrong (Southland); Diantha Smith; Barbara Hammonds; Paul Liu (Taranaki); Suzanne Fletcher (Volcanic Plateau); Max Richardson; David Alderman; Joe Turner-Steele; Dominic Ward; Jennifer Lowe; Claudia Duncan; Sally Eyre; Janice Swanwick; Lane Gordon; Bryn Sheppard (Wellington); Phil Simms; Micah Chiet; Michael O'Shea (Whanganui)

Donations

We also thank the following: Janice Swanwick, Sharon Alderson, Phil Simms, Barry Foster, Olivia Johnston, Liz Duhs, Angus Fordham, Wendy Fox, Ellen Webb, Mike Hermansson, Nicholas Bollen, Mark Belton, Oliver Aughton, Judi Lapsley Miller, Susan Hunsberger

VHF radio transmitter licences

The Banding Office oversees the use of VHF radio transmitters for tracking wildlife and issues sub-licences for restricted frequencies where General User Licence frequencies are unusable due to radio interference. Operating a transmitter in a restricted frequency without a licence can incur the user a fine. We are collating information on wildlife radio tracking to assess and minimise the risk of interference between projects and ensure those operating restricted frequencies are licenced. If you know of a project tracking animals using VHF radio transmitters, please contact us: bandingoffice@doc.govt.nz

MICHELLE BRADSHAW

Avian influenza

High pathogenicity H5N1 avian influenza has spread rapidly across much of the world killing tens or hundreds of thousands of wild birds, especially seabirds. Members, especially beach patrollers, have an important role in surveillance. If you find any unusual mortality events or sick seabirds, especially with neurological symptoms please contact MPI's hotline: 0800-809966. There is a potential risk that bird flu may be transmitted to humans, so please wait for instructions before handling any sick or dead birds. For more info see 'High pathogenicity avian influenza and the risk to NZ':

<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/biosecurity/pests-and-diseases-not-in-new-zealand/animal-diseases-not-in-nz/high-pathogenicity-avian-influenza-and-the-risk-to-nz/>



▲ Otepoti in transit: Joanne Liew/DOC



▲ One of four Kākāpō released at Maungatautari: Peter Drury/DOC.



NZ Bird Atlas – Spring into Action!

As you read this, we'll be enjoying the first moments of the final Spring season of the NZ Bird Atlas project, having wrapped up the last ever Winter season. Thanks for all your efforts so far, we hope you managed to get out and gather some important Winter bird observations, particularly at night to bump up those nocturnal effort hours! We really enjoyed speaking with many of you at the annual conference in New Plymouth and having the opportunity to present on the Atlas project's progress so far.

To date 352,974 checklists have been logged to the Atlas eBird portal by 1,458 atlasers, covering 301 bird species. That represents a staggering total of 115,584 effort hours or 4,816 effort days. It is always humbling how much time and effort has been given by the ever-growing Atlas community. We really hope you continue to enjoy regularly uploading your bird observations to the Atlas portal, and seeking out those under-surveyed areas.

With that in mind, there is still plenty of atlasing to be done this Spring. Current coverage shows that 82% of grid squares have received some data since the Atlas project began in June 2019, even if it's just a five-minute count. That means that over 580 grid squares are still yet to receive some Spring effort. Of course, we'd love for keen atlasers to venture out to these squares to gather some important Spring bird observations if they can! Repeated surveys across the whole grid are the desired outcome over the next three months, spreading that effort over time and space, and trying to gather observations in the less visited areas.

To better help you find those under-surveyed areas, remember to use the tools that are available on the Atlas eBird portal under the 'Explore' page. The Atlas Effort Map and Species Maps are the two key tools we recommend, which can really help with planning. Feel free to share your atlasing adventures with us too. We've loved featuring some atlasing tales on the portal.

Kākāpō return to the mainland

The Department of Conservation (DOC) in partnership with Ngāi Tahu returned Kākāpō to the mainland in July with the translocation of four male birds from Whenua Hou/Codfish Island to predator-free Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari in Waikato. The historic translocation means that Kākāpō are once again living on the mainland for the first time in nearly four decades. DOC also announced there are plans to release another six male Kākāpō there before the end of the year.

The move follows decades of conservation work by DOC and Ngāi Tahu through the Kākāpō Recovery Programme, utilising science and mātāuranga Māori to bring the species back from the brink of extinction. Since 2016 the Kākāpō population has doubled to reach a high count of 252 birds in 2022, which means the offshore islands where they live are now almost at full capacity.

A major goal for Kākāpō conservation is to return them to their natural range on the mainland in unmanaged populations, but like many of our other threatened bird species they need habitat that is free of introduced mammalian predators. Moving birds to the 3,400-hectare fenced sanctuary marks a new phase for Kākāpō conservation that will hopefully lead to more translocations to pest-free mainland sites and, ultimately, to their natural range on the mainland in unmanaged populations.

In terms of the final three Toi Toi Wines funded Atlas expeditions, the West Coast and Otago are key areas lined up for the Spring and/or Summer seasons and we aim to share more information soon on how you may be able to get involved. Please keep an eye on the Atlas project web and Facebook pages for more info. Many thanks again to Toi Toi Wines for providing this valuable funding.

There's only nine months left of this nationally significant project, so please join us in seeking to light up the country with even more bird observations. With your help we will continue to gather an incredibly important national dataset that will help positively inform bird conservation and management decisions for years to come. Happy atlasing!

NZ BIRD ATLAS TEAM



▲ Ian McLean found a Whiskered Tern at Lake Ngatu: Trina Smith.

Northland Bird Atlas expedition

Northland is much larger than you may think. Many areas are under-surveyed, while others have had a good coverage of NZ Bird Atlas counts, especially the Bay of Islands and Whangarei. Atlas counts have tended to be coastal, while the central interior has had fewer counts. There has also been a tendency by visitors and local birders to survey in the same places where certain species are well-known such as Trounson Kauri Park for Kiwi-Nui/North Island Brown Kiwi and around Kaitaia for Eastern Barn Owl.

As a result, there is often an apparent disjunct distribution of certain species. For example, Kiwi-Nui are shown as being present at Puketi Forest and Trounson Kauri Park, but not recorded in the Marlborough Forest, Herekino Forest, Raetea Forest or Ruapekapeka Forest and until our survey, even in Waipoua Forest. These forests all appear to be good habitat for this species and they are probably in there, but no-one has been recording sightings of them in those locations in the NZ Bird Atlas. That's something worth considering next time you're up north!

Our quest in Northland mainly focused on nocturnal counts for Kiwi-Nui, Ruru/Morepork and Eastern Barn Owl. Our itinerary was ambitious with nocturnal counts centred around three overnight destinations: Whatoro (to explore Waima, Waipoua and Marlborough forests plus Trounson Kauri Park); Ahipara (to explore Herekino and Raetea forests, local forest patches and farmland around Kaitaia), and Paihia in the Bay of Islands (to explore the Ruapekapeka and Hukerenui forests).

Our accommodations varied, including motel units and cabins at the Kauri Coast Top 10 Holiday Park and Ahipara Holiday Park, while we had the comfort of hotel rooms at the Scenic Hotel Bay of Islands in Paihia. During daytime, counts were to be made while travelling en route to our destinations. Realistically, we had a lot of ground to cover and it differed from the Gisborne Atlas Expedition in that we did not have a hub to base ourselves at for all three nights.

However, we were able to target a wide variety of habitats to try to spread our efforts including kauri forest, coastal native forest, pine plantations, regenerating scrub, farmland, salt marsh, mangroves, wetlands, lake shores, rocky shores, sandy beaches and urban areas.

Our 12 enthusiastic participants first met at the Matakohē Kauri Museum café on the Friday where we shared our experiences of atlasing and discussed survey protocols. The weekend weather forecast was looking grim when we set off to make our way to Dargaville, with stops at different locations en route to compile our first Atlas checklists. Dinner that evening was at the Northern Wairoa Hotel in Dargaville. Sadly, two people had to leave due to illness that afternoon and we were reduced to 10 people for much of the remaining expedition. After an enjoyable meal, we made our way north to the Kauri Coast Top 10 Holiday Park in Whatoro.

The nocturnal counts on Friday night found Kiwi-Nui in two atlas squares in the Waipoua Forest and at the Kauri Coast Top 10 Holiday Park itself. In these locations Kiwi-Nui had previously not been recorded. We also counted Kiwi-Nui at the well-known Trounson Kauri Park site. Our plan to count in the Marlborough Forest (grid square O58) was thwarted by road closure, but we did count Ruru in what is one of the least counted bird atlas squares.

On the Saturday, the weather deteriorated with strong winds and heavy driving rain becoming worse towards evening. Locations visited during the day on our way to Ahipara included Waipoua Forest, Omapere, Rawene, Kohokohu, Panguru, Mitimiti and Herekino. By the evening, strong winds prevented any serious nocturnal counts, although we did visit locations near Awanui and Kaitaia airport in the hope of finding Easter Barn Owls but without any success.

By Sunday morning the weather had become severe, with strong winds and driving rain. Surveying was at times very difficult and often resulted in a good soaking! From Ahipara to the Bay of Islands, the locations visited included Unahi, Lake Ngatu, the Karikari Peninsula, Taipa, Mangonui and Whangaroa. The bad weather unfortunately prevented any nocturnal counts that evening.

On the Monday morning, our participants headed back home towards Whangarei and Auckland. Locations surveyed included Kawakawa, Ruapekapeka Pa battle site, Lake Waro, Ruakaka and Waipu. The most productive site was the suburban 'Vinegar Lake' stormwater pond in Tikipunga near Whangarei. Birds seen there included 10 Australasian Grebes, 4 Weiweia/NZ Dabchicks and 2 Pateke/Brown Teal.

Despite the bad weather, the expedition was very productive with a total of 327 checklists submitted and 73 bird species recorded. Some of the highlights included an Australasian Bittern on the Mangamuka River, two Kotuku along the Wairoa River, a Eurasian Coot at Lake Whareiti (rare in Northland), Fernbirds in five locations, three Cattle Egrets in a new location near Herekino, and a Whiskered Tern at Lake Ngatu which was the only reportable vagrant species, so an Unusual Bird report will be submitted. You can see the expedition route and all 327 checklists here: <https://ebird.org/atlasnz/tripreport/122369>

IAN McLEAN, AUCKLAND REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE



▲ Pacific Golden Plover in breeding plumage: Michael Szabo.



▲ Tawaki: Doug Gimesy/NZ Birds Online.

National Wader Census 2022

Winter Census 2022: A total of 99,553 waders of 20 species were counted during the June-July 2022 winter wader census, down from 104,073 waders of 21 species counted in June-July 2021. The lower number can be accounted for by some major areas not being counted, including Parengarenga and Houhora, Rangaunu, North Kaipara, Tauranga, Maketu, Raglan, Aotea and Kawhia harbours. South Island Pied Oystercatcher (SIPO) numbers have been declining steadily over recent years but the winter 2022 count of 56,074 was close to the 2021 count of 56,323 despite key sites not being counted. Variable Oystercatcher (VOC) numbers were lower in 2022 with 3,792 counted compared to the 4,439 counted in 2021. However, this is probably accounted for by the lack of counts from Bay of Plenty (BoP) in 2022. That region counted 711 in 2021. Bar-tailed Godwit numbers were up slightly at 10,231 compared to 9,859 in 2021. The number could have been about 1,000 higher if Waikato and BoP sites had been counted.

The Banded Dotterel count of 4,926 was close to the 2021 count of 4,797, which was the lowest since 2013. Only the Southern NZ Dotterels that move to the South Island in the winter were counted and the 45 counted in 2022 was one up from the 2021 count. Red Knot numbers were the lowest recorded in winter at just 632, even though all Red Knot sites except the Far North (last counted June 2017) were counted. The Ruddy Turnstone count of 106 was the lowest since 2007 when 66 were counted. Uncommon winter waders included, 2 Lesser Sand Plovers and one each of Sanderling, Whimbrel, Eastern Curlew, Hudsonian Godwit and Terek Sandpiper.

Summer Census 2022: A total of 128,274 waders of 26 species were counted during the November-December 2022 summer wader census, compared to 122,016 counted in 2021. This was the second lowest count since full coverage was reinstated in 2006. Bar-tailed Godwit numbers were significantly higher in 2022 at 81,769 compared to 65,859 in 2021 and this is the highest count since 2013 (perhaps boosted by more juveniles this year). The 632 Red Knot counted in the winter is reflected in the summer count of 21,657 and is the lowest summer count. As the key Red Knot sites have been counted every year since 1983 and some since 1960, this is a worrying trend.

Ruddy Turnstone numbers were up at 1,403 compared to 1,309 in 2021. This summer slightly more Pacific Golden Plovers were counted with 162, compared to 156 in summer 2021. Only 13 Whimbrel were counted, down from 27 in 2021 and 47 in 2020. The only other Arctic wader to reach double figures was Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (10). Uncommon summer waders included; 4 Eastern Curlew, 2 Greater Sand Plover and one each of the following, Sanderling, Curlew Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Black-tailed Godwit, Hudsonian Godwit and Grey-tailed Tattler.

I wish to acknowledge all who take part in the wader censuses and the regional coordinators who ensure so many sites are covered, and the count data is sent to the national coordinator.

ADRIAN RIEGEN, NATIONAL WADER CENSUS COORDINATOR

10 years of the Birds New Zealand Research Fund

Over the ten years since 2013, Birds New Zealand has awarded funding to 140 bird research projects focusing on 43 NZ bird species, 30 of which are threatened species, including various penguin, kiwi and albatross species as well as Kākāpō, Takahē and Tarāpuka Black-billed Gull. Over that time a total of 105 projects received funding from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund (BNZRF) and 35 projects received funding from our Projects Assistance Fund (PAF). Birds New Zealand administrators the BNZRF, which awards funds generously donated by the T-Gear Charitable Trust, while the PAF is funded from the annual subscriptions and donations of members.

The research has been of a very high quality. BNZRF recipients have included 27 PhD students and 11 MSc students, and we estimate that about a quarter of them have since gone on to work in conservation. The vibrancy and enthusiasm of these younger funding recipients has become a notable feature of our annual conference since the BNZRF was established.

The research funded has contributed to greater knowledge and understanding of the biology, ecology, breeding success, and vulnerabilities of the various study species, which in turn helps to improve conservation actions and policies.

The types of research funded have included a wide range of methods and approaches. For example, the BNZRF has awarded grants funding 16 NZ penguin research projects including Kororā Little Penguin satellite tracking and foraging studies, Tawaki tracking and population studies, and a population genetics study of NZ crested penguins.

Ten grants have funded kiwi research, including a survey of Great Spotted Kiwi distribution and abundance, an assessment of kiwi monitoring methods, studies of avian diseases that can kill kiwi, and Kiwi-Nui genetics.

Five grants have funded Kuaka Whenua Hou Diving Petrel research, including assessments of their population, breeding biology, and conservation status, and the suitability of new islands for future translocations. Four grants have funded Kākāpō research including egg trait variation and viability, genomics, and portable DNA sequencing. Three grants have funded Tarāpuka research including an assessment of their breeding productivity and a nationwide census.

Two grants have funded Takahē research including spatial modelling for a reintroduction to Kahurangi National Park and their genomics. Two more grants funded a genetic study of the evolutionary history of kakariki and the dispersal of a translocated Red-crowned Kākāriki population. Another two grants funded research on Hihī foraging ecology, inbreeding and fertility.

One of the first grants funded the translocation of Chatham Albatross chicks from The Pyramid to main Chatham Island to help establish a second breeding colony.

You can read summaries of the results of all 140 research projects here: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/funding/birds-nz-researchfund/> and here: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/funding/paf/pafprojects/>

If you would like to become a Birds New Zealand member and receive 4 copies a year of this magazine and our journal *Notornis*, you can join here:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/join-now/>



▲ Yellow-bibbed Lorikeets.

Solomon Islands – megapodes and lorikeets

Article by Bruce McKinlay Photographs by Lars Petersson

Ranongga – white-eyes and sea-eagles

“Lukim lufala” (see you) echoes across the bay as we gently rock in the dinghy, quiet after the noise of the outboard which brought us across the sound from Gizo; a different way to knock on the front door from what I am used to in New Zealand! Eventually someone comes down to the beach and Nelson explains our purpose across the water. After a few exchanges, there’s a smile and a welcome and we land on Ranongga Island, in the Western Province of the Solomons Islands. Nelson Manepura of Tourism Solomons, my guide for the week, explains in detail what we wish to do. This was the fourth island on the first day of my introductory visit to birdwatching in the Solomon Islands. My first observations were at Honiara Airport where I watched a Brahminy Kite being mobbed by Common Mynas. After a short flight we landed at Munda, New Georgia. From there as we travelled by open boat to Gizo we had glimpses of Sooty Tern, Crested Tern and Pacific Swallow. Seeing a Solomons Sea Eagle with a fish in its talons was a highlight.

Why Ranongga? After all, I’d only arrived in the country seven hours before from Brisbane. Well, each of the islands has an endemic white-eye species and we were here to see the Ranongga White-eye. After landing we set off with village leader Gayo. In amongst tall forest with patches of gardens we searched. Raucous parakeets called out but were too high in the

canopy and too fast to identify. Not so the Island Imperial-Pigeon which was undisturbed by us passing under its perch. Eventually a flash of green and yellow, and there was a Ranongga White-eye. It was quite different to what I’m used to, with no rufous flanks, but the distinctive eye ring was definitive. Further searching did not add to the bird list so it was back down to the beach with thanks and smiles all around and then back to Gizo before dark – there’s no evening here, this close to the Equator.

Gizo – hornbills and treeswifts

An early walk around Gizo next morning added Sacred Kingfisher, Cardinal Lory, and Olive-backed Sunbird to the list. Then the boat arrived and we set off for the day to the large volcanic island of Kolombangara, which looks similar to Taranaki maunga. On the way we saw flocks of Sooty Terns and a few Brown Boobies on the water. Venti, our host for the day, met us at the waterfront of Humbere Village Homestay. A walk down a beautiful grove of mango trees to the beach allowed observations of Moustached Treeswift, Collared Kingfisher, Beach Kingfisher, Duchess Lorikeet and White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike. A pair of Willie Wagtails were obvious around a cup-shaped nest. We were hunting for the endemic Roviana Rail, which had been reported nearby. Eventually Nelson got a glimpse but that was all, so we headed back to the homestay. The beach here was



▲ Moustached Treeswift.



▲ Ranongga White-eye.

showing obvious signs of erosion and the fringe of palms in front of the Kukudu Adventist College was collapsing into the sea – a common sight along much of the coast that I subsequently visited.

After lunch we waited for a shower to pass and headed across the lagoon to Poporo Village. After negotiations we were welcomed ashore and introduced ourselves. Then we walked out to a small, isolated village after the elusive Roviana Rail, which the locals assured us were common around the house gardens. Some of the forests were spectacular tall over-arching boughs with lianes and dense sub-canopy. As we walked, we could hear a Melanesian Megapode in the distance before our guides pointed out a pair of Blyth's Hornbills sitting on a branch. Back across past Kennedy Island to Fatboys Resort, we were checked in for the night. The evening was quiet with the waves slapping against the beach; my room was over the water with a view of Kolombangara.

Mbambanga Island – emerald doves and lorikeets

Next morning, we walked around Mbambanga Island, early enough to watch as the sun came up over Kolombangara. Again, we were walking through a mix of old growth forest and small cultivated areas. As dawn broke there was a cacophony of doves and parakeets waking up and making raucous calls through the forest. They were accompanied by groups of Coconut Lorikeets, Metallic Starlings and Stephan's Emerald Doves, which were a flash of green at about knee level through the forest. Wheeling above the canopy were Brahminy Kites with Sacred Kingfishers and Pacific Robin roosting in the sub-canopy. As we waited for

the boat to the airport four Osprey and two Brahminy Kites cruised along the forest edge.

Gizo Airport is on an island off the main town. All the airports in the Solomon Islands have the same vibe. Hanging around with not much being done, seeking shelter from the sun as truck-loads of visitors and locals arrive to join the crowd as the appointed time for the daily flight approaches. As we flew south back to Guadalcanal the plane crossed over the Vngunu Island and New Georgia Islands. We had spectacular views of these islands with amazing forest covering much of them. Periodically the forest canopy would organise itself into a regular pattern which was indicative of coconut palms near a village. In some places the creeks were clear, in others they run red: indicative of logging activity. We were in one door at Honiara Airport and out the other and then on the plane to Kirakira on Makira (also known as San Cristobal). As we approached the airstrip the rainy weather cleared and the pilots made a flawless approach. We were soon checked-in to the Freshwind Guest House in downtown Kirakira.

Makira – fruit-doves and cuckoo-doves

Kirakira is the provincial capital of Makira-Ulawa Province. The birdwatching started promptly with a Pied Goshawk flying past the guesthouse as we waited for a shower to pass. After dinner Nelson and I were invited to meet the provincial premier, Julian Maka'a. Over a bowl of kava, we talked over the issues facing Makira, such as protection of local languages, elder care, and the cost of energy. A new solar farm was about to come on-stream at Kirakira to replace a diesel generator as the primary source of electricity in the town. Early next morning we set off along the road with our guide Joseph just before school started so there was a stream of young people in uniforms going into town.



▲ Chestnut-bellied Monarch.



▲ Sooty Myzomela



▲ Melanesian Megapodes: Bruce McKinlay.



▲ Cardinal Lory

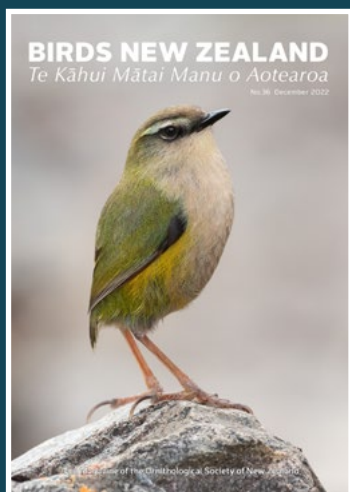
It was a relaxing time without the hassle of boats. In an hour we recorded 16 bird species without leaving the road. New species included Mackinlay's Cuckoo-dove, Yellow-bibbed Fruit Dove, Red-knobbed Imperial Pigeon, Sooty Myzomela, the outrageously coloured Eclectus Parrot, the endemic subspecies of Cardinal Myzomela, and Singing Starling with recently fledged chicks. Later that morning we set off up the hill behind town and added Rufous Fantail and Chestnut-bellied Monarch. The view across town to the bay was a mix of coconut palms, bananas, lianes and broadleaf trees. The islands beyond were murky in the distance emphasising the distances that people need to travel to keep in touch here.

Later that afternoon the Premier offered his vehicle and we set off to a forest area east along the coast. The conversation with the landowner was good. Like all the Solomon Islanders we met he was friendly and very keen to share his forest and birds with us as visitors. But the pressure was on as he had a growing family and he needed space for them to have houses and cleared land to grow crops. An easy walk through the forest brought us to the coast and observations of the endemic White-headed Fruit Dove, Dollarbird, Long-tailed Triller, Pacific Kingfisher, and the endemic Mottled Flowerpecker. A pair of Singing Starlings were at a nest on a branch. As the day ended, we watched the sunset from a hill and observed a pair of Eclectus Parrots copulating.

Savo Island – megapodes and mynas

The next day we got to the airstrip on time for the plane back to Honiara, which was late. Back at Honiara we connected with the boat to Savo and in the afternoon we set off across Iron Bottom Sound for Savo Island. Fleeting glimpses of terns along with flying fish accompanied us. Similar to Kolombangara, Savo is a volcano with active geysers, hot mud lakes and hot springs. As we arrived at Savo Sunset Lodge the sun was disappearing over the horizon in a storm of pink, purple and yellow clouds. We couldn't have timed it better.

Before dawn next morning we were up and, in the boat, heading along the coast to Petupai where the megapode fields are. The villagers at Petupai are very proud of the habitat for nesting Melanesian Megapode that they have created just outside the village. Carefully screened areas of beach gravel surrounded by Pandanus are kept clean of vegetation and disturbance. We could get good views of all that was happening by looking through gaps in the screens. Over time it seems that the birds chose different patches to lay a single egg. The activity by the birds is significant with lots of burrowing in the loose sand to lay a single egg. After returning for breakfast, we walked up the nearby hill with a local guide. A rough track that in places was very steep made it hard work but sightings of Island Imperial Pigeons and Solomons Cockatoo made it worth the effort. The only new record for



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my list was a Long-tailed Myna, quietly sitting in the shade. This middle-sized pied and yellow native bird is very different from the introduced Common Myna. At the top the view out to Guadalcanal was worth it, but equally enjoyable was a tree of ripe mandarins which were easily picked and consumed with gusto by all of us. All the guides and other locals I interacted with were aware of the birds in their patch. When out in the forest they were very sharp eyed and could pick out the cryptically coloured doves long before I could get my eye in. After lunch we set out for Honiara and reached there in good time, with the only wildlife of note being a pod of dolphins playing around our bow as we rounded the south-west corner of Savo Island.

Guadalcanal – cockatoos and swiftlets

The next day was my last here on this trip. Our first stop was a walk around Honiara Botanical Gardens which is a fairly wild place on the edge of the city. A remnant of tall forest there with breeding Solomons Cockatoo, Yellow-bibbed Lory and Uniform Swiftlet all observed. Honiara is a busy place with full buses and a buzz of activity around the markets. Cafés and street food were easily available. Last on the list was a walk on Mt Austin (also mapped as Queen Elizabeth National Park). Extensive views out along the northern coast of Guadalcanal including the city, the airport and Lungga River with Savo Island and the Nggela Islands in the background were a fitting end to the trip. As we walked

downhill a final new addition to my list was a Buff-headed Coucal. Winging their way across the canopy was a group of Blyth's Hornbill and Brahminy Kites, then back to the hotel and onto the plane for Brisbane.

Overall, for the six days during April/May that I was able to undertake some birdwatching I saw a total of 48 species, including 14 endemics. In the time available I was not able to get into the back-country, nor to the estuaries around the coast, so there is still plenty for me to see! Although it was hot and humid, the guides and other locals were enthusiastic and interested in what we wanted to see. Villagers and locals were proud of the forests they lived among and welcoming for us to see the birds that lived there. The Solomons Islands is a diverse country with a wide range of endemic and migratory species. It is well worth making the effort to visit and I thoroughly recommend a birdwatching trip there.

Bruce McKinlay is President of Birds New Zealand. He travelled to the Solomon Islands as a guest of Tourism Solomons:

www.visitsolomons.com.sb/

NB: Solomon Airlines and Air Vanuatu opened a new Auckland-Port Vila-Honiara route in June 2023. This route via Port Vila is a shorter, more direct way to get to the Solomon Islands capital, Honiara. Previously, New Zealanders traveling to the Solomon Islands had to fly further and transit via Australia or Fiji.

Lars Petersson bird photography: <https://www.larsfoto.se/en/>



▲ Birds New Zealand Council and Regional Representatives (L-R): Back row: Phil Battley, Peter Frost, Bruce Postill, Don Goodale, Oliver Druce, Keith Woodley (Councillor), Paul Griffiths, Ian McLean, Colin Miskelly (Councillor). Second row: Thalia Sachtleben, Pat Crowe, Natalie Forsdick (Vice President), Ilse Corkery, Sue Frostick, Bruce McKinlay (President), Mel Galbraith (Councillor), Ian Armitage (Councillor). Third row: Geoff Foreman, Johannes Fischer, Paul Cuming, Ingrid Hutzler (Executive Officer), Mary Thompson, Lynne Anderson (Secretary). Photo: Michael Szabo.

Minutes of the 83rd Annual General Meeting of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (Inc.) held at the Devon Hotel, New Plymouth, 4th June 2023

Present: 121 members including 7 Council members. Society President Bruce McKinlay welcomed everyone and opened the AGM. The agenda and reports were displayed on screen.

Apologies: Paul Garner-Richards, Eleanor Gunby, Bernie Kelly, Paul and Joy Sagar, Sandy Bartle, Rob Schuckard, Willie Cook, Julia Melville, Mike Bell, Sue Bell, Bill Cash, Chris Robertson, Stuart Laurenson, Noel Ward, Jeannie Preddey, and Rebecca Teele.

Motion: That the apologies be accepted. Bruce McKinlay / Colin Miskelly Carried

Recent Deaths: Michael Bradley, Simon Chamberlin, Ray Clough, Barry Donovan, Audrey Eagle, Jim Eagles; Geoff Harrow, Murray Jeffries, Ted Kitching, Sheelagh Leary, Sid Lovell, Ron Nilsson, Kathy Barrow.

Minutes of the 2022 AGM The previous minutes had been circulated online.

Motion: That the minutes of the 82nd AGM held at Christchurch in June 2022, as circulated, be accepted as a true and correct record. Bruce McKinlay / Biz Bell Carried

Matters Arising: There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.

Treasurer's Report: The 2022 accounts have been completed and audited and are available on the website here:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/2022-REVISED-Audited-Annual-Report.pdf>.

There was a deficit for the year of \$23,212 which was partly due to an increase in printing and postage costs. The President read out the Treasurer's Report which had been previously circulated online. There were no questions.

Motion: That the Treasurer's Report and financial statements be accepted.

Bruce / David Lawrie Carried

Nominations for Council: The Secretary announced that a call for Nominations pursuant to the rules was made and nominations were received from: Keith Woodley and Mel Galbraith for two three-year terms. There are still two vacancies on Council including the position of Secretary. The Council will be looking to co-opt for these positions. The President encouraged members to be involved with the governance of the Society.

President's Report: Bruce McKinlay read out the annual report for the 2022 year in which he thanked all those who do outstanding work volunteering for the Society.

There were no questions or matters arising from the report.

Motion: That the President's report be accepted. Bruce / Johannes Fischer Carried

Awards:

Falla Award: awarded to Elizabeth (Biz) Bell to a standing ovation.

Meritorious Service Award: awarded to Gwenda Pulham to a standing ovation.

Notornis New Author: Alison Johnston

Best Student Author: Peter Jahn

Best Student Talks: Kamyia Patel and Pascal Lubbe – first equal

Best Student Poster: Manaia Pearmain-Fenton

Peoples' Choice Poster: Shannon Ritter, Keegan Miskimmin and Lydia Titterton

The President thanked Faunatech for sponsoring the student talks; Richard McMillan (General Manager, Faunatech) announced the winner of their raffle.

Regions with the biggest increase in membership:

Southland (26.5%); Taranaki (23.3%); Otago (19.2%).

General Business: No Notices of Motion had been received by the Secretary.

Notices from Council

1. A motion will be presented at the 2024 Annual General Meeting that the existing OSNZ Constitution be revoked, and a new Constitution will be proposed that will include numerous new requirements and obligations specified in the Incorporated Societies Act 2022.

2. The President advised of a proposal to be made at the 2024 Annual General Meeting to increase membership subscriptions in order that the Society's affairs can be managed effectively.

- A question was asked about whether members who opt out of receiving print copies of *Birds New Zealand* magazine and *Notornis* would receive a reduction in their subscription. The President replied that this will be discussed by Council.

- Murray Williams notified that Christopher Robertson had recently been unwell so could the Society please send him best wishes.

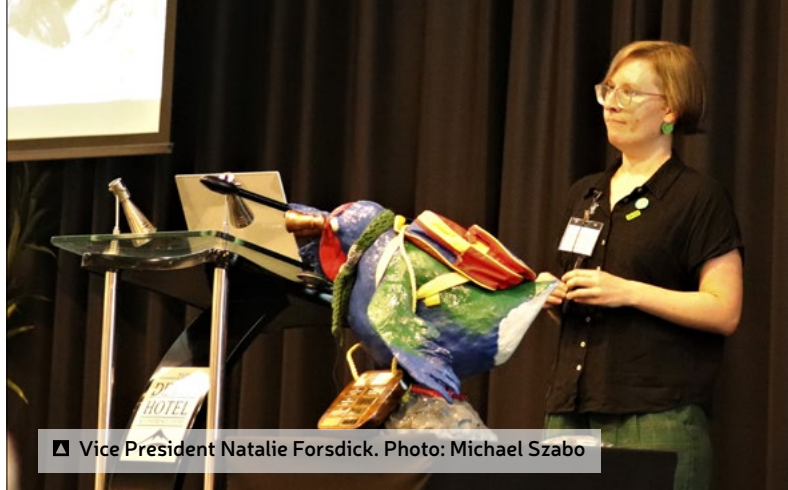
- John Cockrem communicated that the Australasian Ornithological Conference is being held in Brisbane in November this year. More presentations are needed from NZ and abstracts close soon. Student travel grants are available.

The meeting closed at 4.45pm.

Minutes compiled by Lynne Anderson, Secretary.



▲ Tākōketai Black Petrel, Aotea Great Barrier Island. Photo: Michael Szabo.



▲ Vice President Natalie Forsdick. Photo: Michael Szabo



▲ Councillor Colin Miskelly. Photo: Michael Szabo.



▲ Scientific Committee Convener Graeme Taylor. Photo: Michael Szabo.

Robert Falla Memorial Award 2023 – Elizabeth Bell

Elizabeth Bell – better known as Biz – has made a substantial and ongoing contribution to ornithology and conservation, both in NZ and globally. After completing an MSc on one of our endemic frogs in 1995, Biz has spent most of the last 28 years working for Wildlife Management International Ltd (WMIL), based out of Blenheim – a company that she now manages. This work has taken her to remote islands all around the globe, as project leader or adviser on more than 30 island pest eradication projects, and on which Biz has produced more than 50 technical reports. Most of these projects have targeted Ship Rats and Norway Rats, to allow the natural recovery of threatened seabird species.

For nearly 30 years, Biz has led fieldwork to monitor the demography and population trends of Tākōketai Black Petrel on Aotea Great Barrier Island, and assess threats to their survival and breeding success. In the process, she has produced at least seven scientific papers and more than 30 technical reports on Tākōketai, and has worked closely with the Department of Conservation, iwi, landowners, media, and the fishing industry in efforts to raise the profile for, and secure the long-term survival of, this threatened species. This work led to projects on other *Procellaria* species, including studying Grey Petrels on the Antipodes Islands. The *Procellaria* petrels are the largest of the burrow-nesting seabirds, and are notoriously strong and aggressive when handled. It is a tribute to Biz's fortitude that she has persevered with working on this previously poorly-known group of birds, as they have surely exacted their 'pound of flesh' along the way!

Biz has also had long involvement with assessments of fishery impacts on NZ seabirds, through identification and necropsy of birds brought to port by Ministry of Fisheries or Ministry for Primary Industries fisheries observers. She has authored or co-authored at least nine technical reports on this topic since 2002, funded by the fishing industry via a levy managed by DOC's Conservation Services Programme.

For the past 13 years, Biz has served Birds New Zealand as Secretary of the Records Appraisal Committee (RAC), a role

that (thankfully) she still holds. This requires receiving and acknowledging an average of more than 120 Unusual Bird Reports (UBR) per year, assembling them in batches to circulate to the committee, collating all the responses, formatting the decision letters, and sending them out to the submitters, as well as adding all these data to the UBR database on the Society's website. Despite her paid employment frequently taking her far from NZ, and often far from easy access to electricity and internet connection, Biz has provided timely and efficient service to the committee and wider birding community throughout these 13 years. Through this involvement with the RAC, Biz has co-authored seven of the biennial reports on decisions made by the RAC, covering the years 2008 to 2022, and published in (or submitted to) *Notornis*.

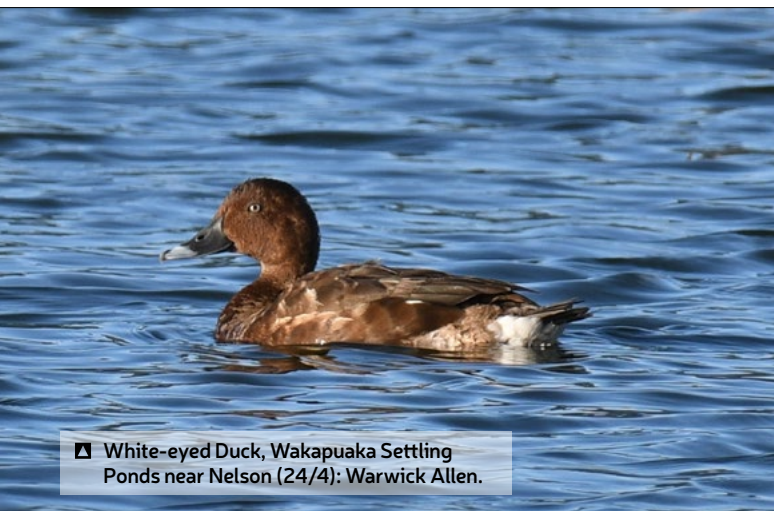
Biz has so far published 19 papers in our Society's journal *Notornis*, with her first contribution being a paper on an attempt to translocate Black Petrels between the two Hauraki Gulf 'barrier islands', published in 2003. However, this is only a fraction of Biz's prolific writing output. She is also the author or co-author of more than 90 conservation management reports, and several papers published in other scientific journals.

Her published output is only a portion of her contribution to NZ ornithology and conservation. Biz manages a team of 15 ecologists at WMIL, providing training opportunities for staff, as well as conservation management that benefits many species, including Black-fronted Terns, Flesh-footed Shearwaters, King Shags, and Chatham Island Taiko, as well as numerous predator control programmes around NZ. Biz also makes considerable outreach efforts with the Tākōketai programme on Aotea, frequently taking mana whenua representatives and commercial fishers into the field to strengthen their connection with these special seabirds.

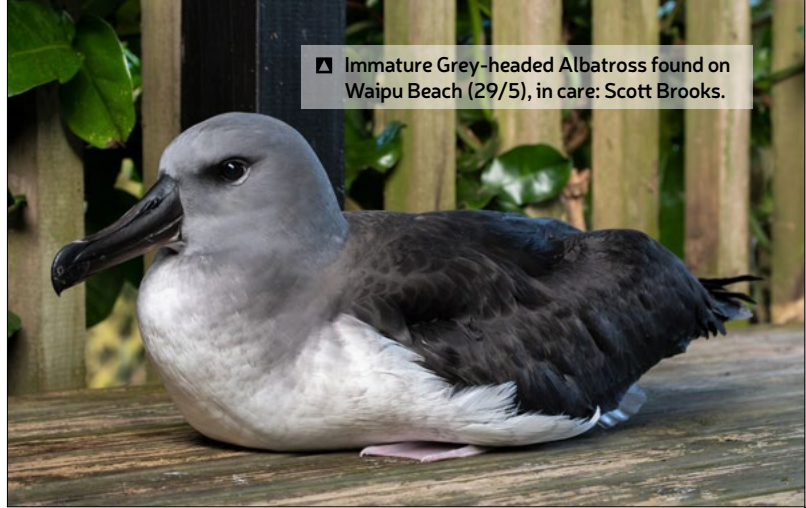
Accordingly, in recognition of her significant contributions to NZ ornithology and sustained service to our Society, Council has determined that Biz Bell shall be presented with a Robert Falla Memorial Award for the year 2023.



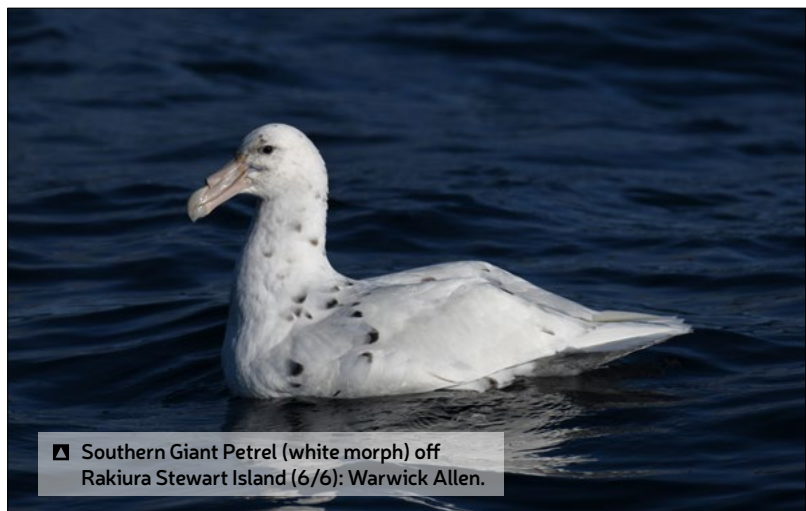
▣ Plumed Whistling Ducks, Mawheraiti WTP, West Coast (27/4): Bradley Shields.



▣ White-eyed Duck, Wakapuaka Settling Ponds near Nelson (24/4): Warwick Allen.



▣ Immature Grey-headed Albatross found on Waipu Beach (29/5), in care: Scott Brooks.



▣ Southern Giant Petrel (white morph) off Rakiura Stewart Island (6/6): Warwick Allen.

Bird News

Some sightings have not received official acceptance by Birds New Zealand's Records Appraisal Committee (1st March 2023 – 1st September 2023).

An **Australasian Crested Grebe** found at Nelson WTP on 5/4 was the first record of this species in the Tasman District for 50 years. A **New Zealand Dabchick** found at Lake Forsyth in Canterbury on 22/5 was joined by a second bird on 27/6. Another was seen on an irrigation pond near Ashburton from 18-20/6, which is the southern-most record of this species since it reportedly began to recolonise the South Island in 2012.

A trio of **Plumed Whistling Ducks** stayed at The Snares from 25/3 to 8/4 and a flock of a dozen was found at Mawheraiti WTP near Reefton on 4/4, with half of them still present on 17/5. An Australian **Chestnut-breasted Shelduck** was at Lake Te Anau on 7/3 and another was found south of Tauherenikau River Delta (Wairarapa) on 11/3. Regular sightings of **Australian Wood Ducks** near Mapua between March and June included a high count of 14 at Hoddy Estuary Park on 24/4. An unusual record was a **Whio** found behind a warehouse in Hastings after Cyclone Gabrielle. A **Grey Teal** found at The Snares on 7/4 was only the second record there. On the mainland, a drake Australian **Chestnut Teal** was found at Ashburton River mouth, 21-22/6. The drake **Northern Shoveler** reported at Pegasus Wetlands in Christchurch in early April was still present on 9/5, with another possible drake at Tip Lagoon in Invercargill from 21-25/5, and the female **White-eyed Duck** found at Wakapuaka Settling Ponds near Nelson on 24/4 stayed to 29/4.

Erect Crested Penguins (ECP) were found ashore on the Chatham Islands at the Forty-Fours (26/1), Stone Cottage Rocks on Maunganui Beach on (9/2), Ocean Mail Reserve (16-18/2), and Flower Pot on Pitt Island (13-23/3). On the mainland, 1

was at Toetoes Bay in Southland on 13/2, a second at Oamaru breakwater from 13-24/2 before being taken into care, and a third was found moulting near Waituna from 13-26/2. A **Tawaki** and another ECP were found ashore near Blackhead Beach on Otago Peninsula on 13/2 with the former still present on 15/2. Another ECP was seen ashore moulting at South Bay, Kaikoura, from 24-27/2 and another Tawaki was seen on rocks near Sumner from 13-14/8. A **Royal Penguin** was ashore moulting on Auckland Island on 13/2 and a **Snares Crested Penguin** at Ocean Beach, Rakiura Stewart Island, on 28/4.

Beach-wrecked immature **Grey-headed Albatross** were found ashore on Waipu Beach in Northland (29/5) and Brighton Beach in Christchurch (19/6). Both were taken into care but succumbed. A third was found dead on Omaha Beach on 25/6. Dead **Light-mantled Sooty Albatross** were found on Muriwai Beach on 10/6 and 10/7 and at Whatipu Beach on 17/6. Then an **Indian Ocean Yellow-nosed Albatross** was reported flying past Clive (Hawke's Bay) during stormy weather on 29/6. A **Pink-footed Shearwater** was photographed on Albatross Encounter pelagic trips off Kaikoura on 2/2 and again on 3/3 – possibly the same bird?

The pelagic trips from Moeraki out to the Otago Canyons organised by Oscar Thomas recorded a **Snowy Albatross** (*D. exulans*), 10 **Wilson's Storm Petrels**, 2 **Grey-backed Storm Petrels** and 3 **Black-bellied Storm Petrels** on 4/3; a **White-headed Petrel**, a **Soft-plumaged Petrel** and a **Brown Skua** on 22/4; and an **Antarctic Fulmar**, 2 Antarctic Prions and a Grey Petrel on 15/7. Pelagic trips from Otago Harbour out past Tairaroa Head recorded a **Great Shearwater** 1km east of Tairaroa Head on 23/3, and a Snowy Albatross, a Grey-backed Storm Petrel, a Black-bellied Storm Petrel and a possible **New Zealand Storm Petrel** on 28/5. A total of 50 **Chatham Petrels** were seen at sea



▲ Soft-plumaged Petrel off the Otago coast (22/4): Bradley Shields.



▲ Antarctic Fulmar, Wellington Branch pelagic trip (5/6): Michael Szabo.



▲ Pink-footed Shearwater off Kaikoura coast (3/3): Gary Melville.



▲ Great Shearwater off Otago Peninsula (23/3): Oscar Thomas.

off Rangatira in the Chatham Islands from 10-11/3 during a Tubenoses Project research expedition organised by Hadoram Shirihai. Another impressive total count was 565 **Broad-billed Prions** plus a Wilson's Storm Petrel at sea west of Rakiura during an Otago University marine survey from 14-15/4. A 4-day pelagic expedition from Oban around Rakiura (6-9/6) organised by Steve Wood recorded a white morph **Southern Giant Petrel**, 5 Broad-billed Prions, a **Salvin's/Antarctic Prion sp.**, and 3 Brown Skuas.

'The Petrel Station' pelagic trips from Tutukaka out past the Poor Knights Islands organised by Scott Brooks recorded 2 **Black-winged Petrels** on 6/3; 3 **Westland Petrels** on 25/4; 11 **Campbell Albatross**, a Soft-plumaged Petrel, 4 Antarctic Prions and 3 Brown Skuas on 25/5; and a Soft-plumaged Petrel and 2 Campbell Albatross on 19/6. In addition, a seawatch from Cape Palliser on 18/3 recorded a **Juan Fernandez Petrel**, and a Soft-plumaged Petrel was seen from a Cook Strait ferry on 11/5. The Wellington branch's quarterly Cook Strait pelagic trip recorded its first Antarctic Fulmar on 6/8 along with 6 species of albatross and a pod of Orca. A **Brown Booby** landed on a yacht 60 nautical miles east of North Cape on 31/5, a **Lesser Frigatebird** was seen flying over Pataua South Beach near Whangarei on 14/4, and a **Red-tailed Tropicbird/Amokura** was found dead at Onemana (Coromandel Peninsula) on 31/1.

There was an influx of **Little Egrets** from Australia with lone birds reported at 21 locations, 3 at Lake Forsyth (27/4-27/6) and 2 at Saltwater Lagoon near Harihari (17/7). There was a possible **Plumed Egret** from Australia at Hawksbury Lagoon (10-12/6) and a **Glossy Ibis** at Pūkoro Miramanda from 11/6 to 6/8 that was joined by a second bird on 11/7. Another was at Whanganui Inlet in Golden Bay on 22/6 and another at Lake Poukawa in Hawke's Bay on 30/7.

The long-staying Australian **Black-tailed Native Hen** in Murchison was still present on 31/7 and 4 **Eurasian Coots** turned up at The Snares from 25/3 to 8/4. Wader news included lone **Greater Sand Plovers** at Green Park Huts (Lake Ellesmere) on 6/5 and Awarua Bay on 28/7, and an **Oriental Plover** near

Waituna-Gorge Road in Southland that stayed from 22-25/2. Four **NZ Shore Plovers** were seen at Spinnaker Reserve on Te Atatu Peninsula in Auckland on 1/6 and another was at Whitford on 4/3. A **Little Whimbrel** was seen at the New River Estuary shellbanks on 12/2 and 5/3, a **Black-tailed Godwit** in breeding plumage was at Pūkoro Miramanda on 15/5, and a **Hudsonian Godwit** in breeding plumage was seen at Aramoana Saltmarsh (18-19/4) and then at Pleasant River Estuary on 13/5. A **Great Knot** was at Motukea Spit on 5/3 and a **Terek Sandpiper** with a **Grey-tailed Tattler** at Awarua Lagoon in Southland on 2/5 was still present there with 55 **Southern NZ Dotterels** (SNZD) on 17/6 and with 47 SNZD on 28/7.

Four **Long-tailed Skuas** flew past during a seawatch at Cape Palliser on 18/3. A **Black Noddy** was seen off the coast near Waitete on the Coromandel Peninsula on 23/4 plus a **Pomarine Skua**. A 'Petrel Station' pelagic trip visiting the Poor Knights Islands on 6/3 discovered a new **Grey Ternlet** roost site at an offshore rock pinnacle and recorded a new day trip high count of 225 Grey Ternlets. Further south, 100 Grey Ternlets were recorded on a pelagic trip to Volkner Rocks Marine Reserve in Bay of Plenty on 8/3.

An Unusual Bird Report of a **Grey-backed Tern** from Papakanui Sandspit at Kaipara Harbour on 18/12/22 has been accepted by the Records Appraisal Committee, which means more tern species (21) were recorded in New Zealand in 2022 than in any previous year. An **Australian Gull-billed Tern** was present at Manawatu Estuary from 9-17/4 before another was found at nearby Himatangi Beach on 29/4 – possibly the same bird? Another was at Motueka Spit on 23/4, and then 2 were seen there on 25/4. Two were also seen at the head of Awarua Bay in Southland on 28/4, followed by 1 at Tiwai Spit on 3/5, and then 2 at Whanganui Estuary on 9/6.

There were more **White-winged Black Tern** (WWBT) sightings from the Canterbury coast, with up to 10 at Coopers Lagoon on 11/3 followed by 5 there and 9 at Kaitorete Spit on 12/3. Then 9 were at McEvedys Rd near Coopers Lagoon on 18/3; 1 was at Coopers Lagoon and 3 at Kaitorete Spit tip on 2/4;



▲ Hudsonian Godwit with Bar-tailed Godwits, Pleasant River, Otago (13/5): Oscar Thomas.



▲ Grey-tailed Tattler with Terek Sandpiper (right), Awarua Lagoon (2/5): Bradley Shields.



▲ Antarctic Tern west of Rakiura Stewart Island (15/4): Oscar Thomas.



▲ Possible NZ Storm Petrel off Taiaroa Head (28/5): Oscar Thomas.



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▲ 1. Little Egret, Ashley Estuary (6/8): Ben Ackerley; 2. Chestnut Teal drake at Ashburton River mouth (22/6): Warwick Allen; 3. Oriental Plover at Waituna-Gorge Road, Southland (22/2): Ann Kohlhaas; 4. Little Whimbrel, New River Estuary shellbanks, Invercargill (5/3): Sean Jacques. 5. Grey-backed Tern, Papakanui Sandspit, Kaipara Harbour (18/12/22): Jacob Ball; 6. White-winged Black Tern in 'Dalmatian' plumage, Pūkoro Mirando (9/4): Sally Eyre; 7. Whiskered Tern, Pūkoro Mirando (1/4): Simon Binzegger; 8. Brown Booby at sea off North Cape (31/5): Rah J. Poolman

2 near the Lake Ellesmere opening at Taumutu on 9/4; 1 at the Ashburton River mouth on 24/4; and 1 in breeding plumage near Chertsey, west of the Rakaia River on 14/7, indicative of a northern hemisphere bird. The **Whiskered Tern** and WWBT first reported at Pūkoro Mirando on 19/3 were both still present on 6/8 and 15/5 respectively. The latter was seen in 'Dalmatian' plumage on 19/4, indicative of a northern hemisphere bird coming into breeding plumage. Then on 29/6, a WWBT in non-breeding plumage was seen there. In Southland there was a WWBT at Waituna Lagoon on 26/2 and 18/3; 2 on Oreti Beach on 13/3 and 1 on 15/3; and 1 at the New River Estuary shellbanks on 7/3. There was also 1 at the Tukituki River mouth near Haumoana from 21/5 to 27/6. A Whiskered Tern was at Lake Ngatu near Waipapakauri in the Far North on 30/4. Another at Horahora Domain on Lake Karapiro stayed from 12-22/5, and another was at Walker Island, near Tauhou in Kaipara Harbour on 17/6.

An **Arctic Tern** was seen at Kaiua Spit boat channel on 19/2. Another was at Wakapatu Beach near Riverton on 26/3,

and another was reported at sea west of Rakiura (14-15/4) plus 4 **Antarctic Terns**. Four Antarctic Terns were also reported at sea off Rakiura (6-9/6) and a juvenile was seen flying along the beach at Wainono Lagoon (Canterbury) on 10/7. Reports of **Eastern Common Tern** (*S. h. longipennis*) included lone birds at Waikanae Sandspit on 30/1, 17/2, 19/2, 12/3 and 14/3, plus 2 there on 21/1 and 3 on 11/3. Lone birds were also seen at Plimmerton fire station rocks on 11/3 and 26/3; Manawatu Estuary on 12/2; Gulf Harbour marina breakwater on Whangapaoroa Peninsula on 26/2; Kawakawa Bay in Auckland on 11/4; Table Cape on Mahia Peninsula on 17/4; and off Akaroa Heads Lighthouse on 18/6. Lastly, an **Eastern Barn Owl** was seen flying near Hamilton on 10/4 and an **Australian Tree Martin** was photographed on the wing over the Auckland Islands on 5/2.

Sources: eBird NZ, Unusual Bird Reports, BirdingNZ.net Forum, New Zealand Birders Facebook group, Regional Roundup, iNaturalist NZ.



■ One of 48 Chatham Petrel chicks translocated from South East / Rangatira / Hokoreoreo Island to artificial burrows on Mangere Island / Maung' Rē in May where they were fed sardine smoothies until they fledged and departed: Jemma Welch/DOC.



■ Southern NZ Dotterel: Glenda Rees.

Southern NZ Dotterel closer to the brink

The Department of Conservation reports that 40-50 Southern New Zealand Dotterels died over the last breeding season. At least some adults bred successfully on Rakiura/Stewart Island, which offset part of the decline, so the population lost circa 18 individuals, a 13% decline from the last year's estimated 144 birds. Predation by feral cats is one of the biggest threats to this species. Only an estimated 126 birds remain which are limited to breeding on the mountain tops of Rakiura, and to Awarua Bay on the Southland coast where they forage outside the breeding season. The recently formed Southern New Zealand Dotterel Recovery Team will see four dedicated field staff increasing feral cat control in their breeding areas in preparation for the next breeding season, from October to January.

2024 Makarora Field Camp for Young Birders

A Field Camp for Young Birders (13-18 years old) will be held from 8th-13th January 2024. Led by Aspiring Biodiversity Trust with Birds New Zealand, it will be based at Makarora near the head of Lake Wanaka. The programme includes mist-netting, bird banding, 5-minute bird counts, predator control, river bird survey, acoustic survey for bats, and more. It will also be a chance to learn about geophysiography, biodiversity monitoring, and threat management from practising experts. See Wrybill, Black-fronted Tern, Black-billed Gull and Banded Dotterel breeding on braided river habitat. Nearby beech forest is habitat for Brown Creeper, Mohua, Kākā and Ruru, and Rock Wren, Kea and Whio live in the alpine areas. The cost is \$450 per person (possible bursaries). Accommodation is in cabins with all meals catered. To register your interest and get more details please email:

info@aspiringbiodiversity.co.nz



■ *Eudyptula wilsonae* painting by Giova Favazzi.

Fossils support NZ origin for smallest living penguins

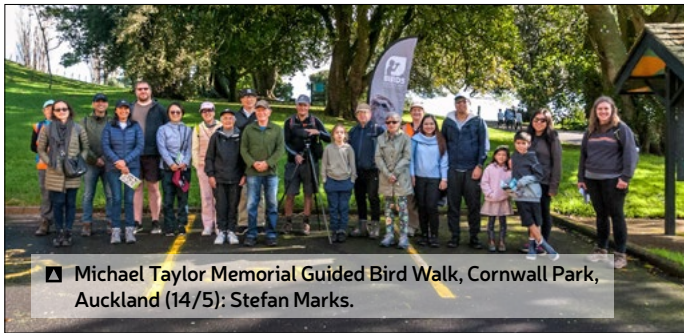
A newly described extinct species of penguin identified from fossils found in South Taranaki could have been an ancestor of the Kororā Little Penguin (*Eudyptula minor minor*), the smallest living penguin species. The fossils were discovered by Karl Raubenheimer in three-million-year-old sediments within the rohe of Ngāti Ruanui and Ngāruahine.

Near-complete skulls of an adult and a fledged juvenile were analysed by Dr Daniel Thomas of Massey University, Alan Tennyson and Felix Marx of Te Papa, and Daniel Ksepka of Bruce Museum (USA). Both skulls showed more slender proportions than modern Little Penguins.

Their research supports a New Zealand origin for Kororā. The link between Kororā and the extinct species was particularly interesting as the age of the fossils suggests the close relatives of Kororā living in Australia today (*Eudyptula m. novaehollandiae*) may have originally come from the now mostly submerged continent of Zealandia.

The new species has been named *Eudyptula wilsonae* after the late NZ ornithologist Kerry-Jayne Wilson MNZM, who was an internationally respected seabird researcher and conservation advocate. She co-founded the West Coast Penguin Trust and served as its first Chair from 2006 to 2020.

Lead co-author Dr Thomas says, "These newly discovered fossils show little penguins like kororā have been part of coastal ecosystems of Zealandia for at least three million years. This is important when thinking about the origins of these penguins, the evolution of the seabird diversity of Aotearoa and the dynamic environment in which they live. For one thing, the climate has changed a lot over this time and this lineage has been robust to those changes."



Michael Taylor Memorial Guided Bird Walk, Cornwall Park, Auckland (14/5): Stefan Marks.



Nankeen Night-heron adult with juvenile, Upokongaro (20/7): Jim Norris.

FAR NORTH

During our May survey along 90-Mile Beach we counted 6 Banded Dotterels, 6 NZ Dotterels, and 450 South Island Pied Oystercatchers (SIPOs), but unusually few gulls. Our July field trip was to add Atlas checklists in the Opuapahia area where we saw at least 15 Sacred Kingfishers foraging on a silty beach. Then at the Waitangi Estuary 6 Sacred Kingfishers were seen foraging on the beach and 10 Royal Spoonbills feeding in a side creek.

Kevin Matthews reports from Unahi that Cattle Egret numbers there had increased to 41 and Royal Spoonbills to circa 700 on 9/8, but he says the spoonbills are becoming trickier to count exactly because as their numbers increase, they move further away from the wharf to roost. He also reports seeing several hundred Buller's and Fluttering shearwaters off East Beach and a NZ Tomtit further north. While driving around backroads we have noticed NZ Fantails are numerous whenever we stop. We have also seen a lot of Paradise Shelducks on wet paddocks, and a flock of 20 Pied Stilts on a paddock at the back of Whangaroa Harbour. - ISABELLA GODBERT

NORTHLAND

The whole of the north has been saturated, making counting waders difficult. Repairs at Port Whangarei also caused disruption. In June, 130 Black Swans were present in Whangarei Harbour, the most recorded since the counts began and since the eelgrass was destroyed by sediment from Portland Cement wet concrete processing. That process ended in the 1970s, but some sediment is still being re-suspended. The winter flock of Bar-tailed Godwits is using Whangarei Airport margins as a high tide roost for the first time in many years. The number of Wrybills continues to decline; only 14 were detected this year. Mallards have been using completely different riverine sites in the pre-hunting and hunting periods compared to last year.

In June, Tony Crocker, the resident ornithologist on many Pacific Cruises, gave a fascinating talk about Pacific birds and the spread and extinction of bird species across the Pacific with reference to island biogeography. The lack of a working PowerPoint did not detract from Tony getting his message across and members having an enjoyable evening. In July, Tom Denser of the Bream Head Trust talked about activities there, which generated considerable discussion from members who have counted at the site.

A team of members has assisted the regional council with 5-minute bird counts for Tiakina Whangarei in the surrounding bushlands. This

work is the outcome of monitoring for predator control. Pat Miller has been doing a great job beach patrolling, and I had the pleasure of accompanying him on 7/7 when we found a White-headed Petrel, Westland Petrel, and White-capped Albatross. He is interested in the relationship between Scott Brooks' live sightings at the "Petrel Station" out past the Poor Knights Islands and beach patrol records on the Northland coast. He says a few species are being detected on west coast beaches that have not yet been seen at the Petrel Station. Recent Petrel Station trips (www.thepetrelstation.nz/) have recorded some more interesting species, including 4 Grey-backed Storm Petrels, 4 Brown Skuas, 2 Soft-plumaged Petrels and 2 Antarctic Prions.

- TONY BEAUCHAMP

AUCKLAND

June was a busy month for our wader census counts. A total of 21 participants counted at 24 different South Kaipara Harbour census sites on 17/6, including 7,225 SIPOs, 1,749 Bar-tailed Godwits, 873 Banded Dotterels, 117 Northern NZ Dotterels, 154 Wrybills, 2 Whimbrels, 275 Black-billed Gulls, 22 NZ Fairy Terns, 1 Little Tern, 320 Royal Spoonbills and 2 Australasian Bitterns. The Waitemata Harbour census on 18/6 recorded 82 Wrybills, 74 Banded Dotterels, 12 Bar-tailed Godwits and 15 Royal Spoonbills.

We had two public advocacy events that proceeded despite often inclement weather. The Michael Taylor Memorial Guided Bird Walk at Cornwall Park on 14/5 attracted 30 people. While it was wet underfoot, we had some rare fine weather. Birds seen ranged from the often very elusive Helmeted Guineafowl to the more numerous Common Pheasants, California Quails, Yellowhammers, Paradise Shelducks, Kereru and Tui. Our Ambury Park Guided Walk on 9/7 was more of a challenge for the 25 participants who had to brave the cold and some driving rain. Birds seen included 440 SIPOs, 40 Bar-tailed Godwits, 160 Royal Spoonbills, 21 Caspian Terns and an impressive 1,200 Wrybills.

Our beach patrols were limited by stormy weather. Unexpected high winds and driving rain reduced our Pakiri beach patrol on 25/6 to just the estuary, where we found 1 Little Penguin, 1 Buller's Shearwater and 1 Flesh-footed Shearwater. South Muriwai patrols were more regular. One on 13/5 found no beach wrecked birds, while another on 10/6 found 1 White-headed Petrel and 1 Light-mantled Sooty Albatross (LMSA). A patrol on 8/7 found 1 White-capped Albatross, 5 Fairy Prions and 2 Little Shearwaters. The ability to submit beach patrol records online now has encouraged

many Auckland members to submit records of individual beach patrols for beaches that are not usually part of our organised patrols. Sadly, these individual patrols found 7 more beach-wrecked albatrosses during June-July, including 1 juvenile Grey-headed Albatross at Omaha Beach, 1 Buller's Albatross at Te Henga/Bethels Beach, 2 LMSAs at mid Muriwai Beach, and 1 Buller's Albatross, 1 LMSA and 1 White-capped Albatross at Whatipu. Most of these albatrosses appeared underweight, but 2 where the victims of fisheries bycatch. Relatively few rarities have been reported over winter in our region. I found a Whiskered Tern at Walker Island in the Kaipara Harbour during the Kaipara Wader Census on 17/6 and a Shore Plover was seen by Bill Wang at Orangihina in Te Atatu on 30/7 (a bird from Motutapu Island).

- IAN McLEAN

SOUTH AUCKLAND

At our May meeting, Shaun Lee gave a very interesting talk on his work creating bird decoys using a 3D printer, and some of the projects they have been used in. Dan Burgin was our speaker in June, who has been studying Toanui Flesh-footed Shearwaters on Ohinau Island (off the Coromandel coast) with colleagues from Wildlife Management International for several years. Sadly, they are now finding pieces of plastic around the colonies and inside the stomachs of dead chicks. This is thought to be one of the reasons why the 22/23 breeding season was the worst since their research began. Instead of a speaker at our July meeting we did some useful work updating the maps for the wader census. David Lawrie gave an update on the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership, which led to discussion on efforts to halt the decline of the critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper.

During the Firth of Thames wader census on 11/7 interesting sightings included 2 Glossy Ibis and 2 Whimbrels at Pukorokoro Miranda, and 17 Banded Dotterels in paddocks south of Ngatea. Up to 31 NZ Dabchicks were seen on the Stilt Ponds in June and July but that may change now the ponds are being drained. A Black-fronted Dotterel was seen wandering around the Shorebird Centre car park on 19/6. A total of 18 Cattle Egrets were seen along Forestry Road in Otatau on 17/5, and in the same locality 32 were seen on 28/7 and 31 on 5/8. Another 2 were seen at Patetonga on 23/7. Eight noisy Kaka were seen and heard flying into the Paeroa Domain on 26/5, with individuals spotted around Amodeo Bay and Kereta on Coromandel's west coast between 28/5 and 30/5. There were also a few sightings of a Little Egret around Weymouth Beach



between May and August. A total of 22 Sulphur Crested Cockatoos were seen flying around near Clevedon-Kawakawa Rd on 5/7 and flooded paddocks by the Waikato River attracted waterfowl, including 372 Grey Teal at Mercer (10/6) and 8 NZ Dabchicks at Meremere (6/7).

Sightings of banded birds include 2 White-fronted Tern at Tararu on 23/5 with a longevity record of 25 years 4 months and 4 days since banding. A Black-billed Gull seen at Te Puru has a longevity record of 27 years 4 months and 7 days since banding. Lastly, NZ Dotterel 'JAB' banded on Auckland's west coast was sighted on the east coast at Kaiaua.

- SUE FROSTICK

WAIKATO

It has generally been a wet winter across the region, which made flooded paddocks an attractive habitat for water birds. Royal Spoonbills have been seen feeding in these temporary pools sporadically this season, and while nesting has not yet started in Te Aroha or Lake Kimihia (Huntly), small flocks have remained at these sites through the winter, and we hope to find evidence of successful breeding soon. A Kotuku was seen south of Paeroa in May and a few flocks of Cattle Egrets have been reported around the Waikato.

It seems there is a reliable but little-known winter site for Australasian Bittern along the Marokopa River flats in paddocks adjacent to some wetlands just upriver from Marokopa Village. Hamish Dean saw 3 bitterns there on 26/7, the third time that multiple bitterns have been seen at once there in the past few years. Another bittern was seen at Colville Bay (Coromandel) by Caiden Binzegger, who also reports a continuing population of Pateke, with 48 seen from the Colville Bridge.

Some exciting news was the recent release of four male Kākāpō at Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari near Cambridge in the Waikato. These birds were translocated from Codfish Island/Whenua Hou during July. Hopefully they will demonstrate that the maunga is a viable location for further translocations (and perhaps breeding) in the future.

It was quite exciting when Bernard Michaux found a Whiskered Tern at the Horahora Domain Bridge about halfway along Lake Karapiro on 12/5 that stayed until 21/5. August is often the best time for a lucky encounter with a Bellbird in the greater Hamilton area and indeed Caiden Binzegger had one near Newstead. Further south, Jesse Golden visited the Kokako hotspot at Mapara. While the track is becoming a bit overgrown, it is still worth a visit as Jesse Golden found when he spotted a pair of blue-wattled beauties there. Pūkorokoro Miranda has also turned up some great birds including over-wintering Black-tailed Godwit and Red-necked Stint, a Whiskered Tern, and a Glossy Ibis that was still present in August.

- RUSSELL CANNINGS

BAY OF PLENTY/VOLCANIC PLATEAU

While we have had no evening meetings of late, members have been out and about, mainly to our harbours for the Winter Wader Census counts in June. Higher numbers of Bar-tailed Godwits at some sites have been welcomed, particularly the mid-harbour roosts inshore of Matakana Island (465 at 1 site).

Winter sees the return of birds to the orchards and horticultural areas of the western Bay of Plenty - namely Kaka. The Omokoroa Golf Course's mature trees also came in for a fleeting visit from an itinerant bunch of them in June. There is an eBird meeting planned to boost interest in the last year of the Atlas project, and a few members have been filling in spare Atlas squares in a more targeted, less scattershot, manner! Of interest was a metal-banded Mallard at Carmichael Wetlands, Bethlehem, in July that was possibly a Fish & Game bird that was banded over in the Waikato?

- PAUL CUMING

GISBORNE/WAIROA

Rain storms have persisted in the Tairāwhiti region with the Gisborne road network once again being cut off from all directions. A bonus was the southerly storm that brought in some pelagic species close to shore - rare for Gisborne.

Our planned mid-winter wader count at Te Wherowhero attracted 6 people but had to be aborted because even the 4WD could not handle the depth of water on the track and surrounding land leading to the lagoon. We had to be content with having a close view of 10 Royal Spoonbills gathered on nearby grassland. Another bonus from all the rain was a deeply flooded paddock alongside Awapuni Road (SH35) attracting a considerable number of birds, including 280 Grey Teal, 191 Paradise Shelducks, 70 Pied Stilts on 4/7 and 154 Grey Teal, 167 Black Swans, 90 Paradise Shelducks, 56 Pied Stilts and 34 Canada Goose on 13/7. Flooded paddocks at Mahanga (Mahia) also rewarded Malcolm Rutherford with many waterbirds; in particular a large number of Australasian Shovelers.

The Mahia Peninsula wader count out to Table Cape finally went ahead on 4/8 in windy but fine weather. White Rock was covered with hundreds of NZ Fur Seals including pups. On 17/4, an immature Common Tern was seen among the White-fronted Terns at Table Cape, photographed by Russell Cannings. Lastly, a mature Kiwi-Nui was seen on a trail camera in the Raukumara Ranges. This caused much excitement and optimism among those advocating for the protection of this area. It was generally supposed that there were no kiwi surviving in the Raukumara.

- GEOFF & RAEWYNN FOREMAN

TARANAKI

Abysmal weather caused the cancellation of our May indoor meeting and subsequent field trip. June's meeting was postponed due to some members being busy putting the finishing touches to the annual conference. The conference was a resounding success with an excellent venue, a diverse range of talks (thanks to Phil Battley and team), and the weather was reasonable for the Monday field trips. Members who visited the Lake Rotokare Reserve were very impressed with the jewel in the Taranaki crown. Big thanks to Fiona Gordon for her comprehensive talk. We received nothing but positive comments. I am proud of what our team achieved. Thank you to all those who gave talks, exhibited posters, and to our sponsors, and especially to those of you who made the effort to attend.

Unfortunately, some people contracted

Covid post-conference (myself included), so to be safe our indoor meeting that month was also cancelled. July finally saw a return to normality with 8 of us turning up for the meeting. Barry Hartley reported 2 nests at the Pied Shag colony just north of the Awakino Hotel with 10-12 shags coming and going. Pied Shags are becoming a lot more common around Taranaki now. Kārearea were heard and seen in the city and in rural Tarata, and Steve Purdon saw a pair of Ruru perching on the clothesline one evening at his rural block east of Inglewood.

Vaughan Turner and I went looking for Kokako reliably reported in the Waitaangas about an hour drive northeast of New Plymouth. We had no luck but NI Robins were numerous and we were mobbed by a flock of very vocal Popokatea. Fernbird and Grey Duck were also seen. Vaughan has also struck up a friendship with a local pair of Little Penguins that inhabit coastal rocks not far from his home. Two of us went looking for Royal Spoonbill for the nationwide census, surveying rivers and estuaries in northern Taranaki. We found 1 roosting on the edge of the Waitara River and Barry Hartley recorded 11 at Mokau river earlier in the month. There were no others seen until we reached Awakino which is technically in the Waikato. Four were seen upriver under the Pied Shag colony - so much for the report on RNZ National that spoonbill numbers had gone ballistic. Back home at Waiongana, 5 NZ Dotterels including 2 males in breeding plumage are on the beach and 9 Pied Stilts seen at the lagoon edge were the most seen for a long time.

- PETER FRYER

HAWKE'S BAY

Our May field trip saw 7 members head to Blowhard Bush in the Kawekas. The weather was sunny and mild, and we had good numbers of Tūi, Korimako/Bellbirds, Popokatea/Whiteheads, and Toutouwai/North Island Robins. There was discussion among members about finch numbers post-cyclone, with some commenting on a notable absence and others seeing good sized flocks. Winter rain hampered our efforts to get out. Our winter wader census had to be cancelled due to rain and we haven't had a decent weekend since to complete it.

A Cattle Egret was reported in a roadside paddock on the Hastings side of Lake Poukawa on 24/2 and a Glossy Ibis was seen by the lake from the road on 30/7. A pair of Kārearea/NZ Falcons have been present at Hastings Golf Club after successfully raising 3 young there over summer. The White-winged Black Tern that has been present for the past couple of years was seen again at Haumoana in May, along with 2-3 Tarapirohe/Black-fronted Terns and up to 9 Kāruhiruhi/Pied Shags. Tarapirohe numbers observed increased through May and June, and circa 35 recorded in late June near the Tukituki River mouth.

A Kārearea was also seen in a tall Phoenix Palm "where there was lots of food" in Haumoana. In mid-June, 3 mutilated Pakahā/Fluttering Shearwaters were found on Ocean Beach. The Australasian Little Grebe first seen in April was still present in June and on 29/6, in the worst wind conditions imaginable, an Indian Ocean Yellow-nosed Albatross was spotted by Sav Saville flying past Clive quite close to shore. There was also a report from



Warwick Allen of “a Kōtuku and a couple of bitter” in flooded paddocks in the Lake Poukawa area on 6/8.

– THALIA SACHTLEBEN & BERNIE KELLY

WHANGANUI

The excitement caused by the discovery of 4 pairs of Nankeen Night-herons nesting at Upokongaro earlier this year has not abated. Jim Norris and Paul Gibson, with occasional inputs from others, are continuing to monitor the night-herons as and when weather conditions and other commitments allow. Immediately following the fledging of the 6 or 7 chicks, which took place from late February to early May, there was a quiet period, during which few birds were seen, including none of the juveniles.

This is not surprising because adults of many species seem to go through a refractory phase in the immediate post-breeding period, when they are quite quiet and covert in their behaviour, especially if they are accompanied by recently fledged juveniles. Given the extended period over which the chicks from the various nests fledged, it is difficult to say just how long this refractory period lasts, but the numbers of birds seen began rising from mid-May onwards. At the end of July, Paul Gibson recorded 13 birds: 9 adults, 1 sub-adult and 3 juveniles. Fortunately, the gradual reappearance of the adults meant that many people travelling to and from Birds New Zealand's annual conference in New Plymouth in early June, visited Upokongaro to see and photograph the species.

Visitors to the region also managed to turn up some other interesting species, most notably an Australian Gull-billed Tern, seen by Geoff de Lisle and Dallas Bishop on the Whanganui Estuary on 1/6. This is not the first time that this species has been recorded on the estuary, but it was sufficiently exciting to get the local bird photographers out looking for it. Michael O'Shea eventually found 2 birds on 9/6, which he photographed, as did Paul Gibson later the same day.

Two Kākā appeared at Bason Botanic Garden in mid-June. This caused a stir among those who had watched and photographed 2 Kākā last year. Speculation mounted as to whether they were the same individuals. Close examination of the many photographs taken showed that although there was 1 male and 1 female, there was last year, both of this year's birds juveniles, arguably less than 4 months old, as they still had a yellow tinge to their ceres, yellowish periophthalmic rings, and yellow eye-rings. Finally, 10 Cattle Egrets have returned to the same farm on Whangaehu Beach Road where egrets have overwintered annually since the mid-1980s.

– PETER FROST

WAIRARAPA

Our May field trip was to the south coast, beginning with a walk on the beach at Whangaimoana. This includes a precious wetland habitat tucked behind the beach. There was a good selection of birds including a major conference of Australian Magpies (24) and a large flock of Redpolls. We hit the royal flush of finches and their ilk: Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Redpoll. Vocal contributions included Skylarks, Paradise Shelducks and Spur-winged Plovers.

We then moved to the Lake Ferry outlet to the sea and small Lake Okorewa. One NZ Pipit was observed plus a good selection of shags and gulls but no terns were seen, which was unusual.

Our June expedition was to the heart of Masterton to check out the urban birdscape along the Waipoua River walkway, and in and around QEII Park. All the regular introduced species were about plus plenty of NZ Fantail, Grey Warbler, Silvereye and Sacred Kingfisher. We also visited the small and well looked after Manuka St reserve in north Masterton. All in all, 23 species and 5 Atlas checklists.

Encouraged by the NZ Bird Atlas talk at the annual conference we set off on a beautiful winter's day to Tora on the east coast where Atlas observations are very sparse, especially in winter. With multiple stops on the way we secured 8 checklists covering 33 species and 5 Atlas squares. Of note was the ubiquitous presence of Sacred Kingfishers. Highlights included a group of Black-fronted Dotterels, a close-up encounter with a NZ Pipit, and some Pied Stilts. No Red-billed Gulls or oystercatchers were seen.

Several of our members are involved with pest control and observations on a Banded Dotterel nesting programme beside the lower Waingawa River in partnership with the farmer and landowner. Dotterels have successfully nested here for the last few years and up to 10 have now been seen on site which is very encouraging

– OLIVER DRUCE

WELLINGTON

Winter can be a slow month for birdwatching in Te Whanganui-a-tara but local members proved otherwise this year! Our quarterly pelagic trip off the south coast coincided with benign weather, which helped make it one of the most memorable since we started them in 2017. We recorded our first Antarctic Fulmar for one of these trips, which was seen associating with the flock of Cape Petrels that accompanied the boat. We counted 6 species of albatross flying around and landing on the water close to the boat, from the big Southern Royals to the smaller Buller's. Also welcome were small numbers of Westland Petrel and Fairy Prion, and a pod of 3 Orca/Maki that repeatedly swam around the boat, much to the delight of the 20 members on board.

On top of that, several winter storms brought more good seabirds to the (extended) Te Whanganui-a-tara coast. A Grey-backed Storm Petrel was seen off Sinclair Head and several Soft-Plumaged Petrels were seen off Cape Palliser. There was also a report of a Cirl Bunting and a Yellowhammer with a flock of sparrows at Prince of Wales Park in Mt Cook on 22/7. As usual, recent bird sightings were discussed at our monthly (hybrid) meetings along with a wide variety of topics covered by members and several guest speakers from South America! We had talks from Enzo Rodrigo Reyes about his PhD on the conservation of and reintroduction planning for the Floreana Mockingbird on Galapagos, and from Alice Perreira on her work in Brazil on the beach patrol schemes there and seabird bycatch mitigation as part of her role for Projeto Albatroz! Both are great examples of how these monthly meetings, especially in hybrid format, can extend our reach and can connect our members beyond regional and

national boundaries to members and non-members alike. Lastly, the Capital Kiwi Project reported in August that 1 of 15 monitored Kiwi-Nui released at Makara earlier this year has been radio-tracked and found just off the Skyline Walkway near the city.

– JOHANNES FISCHER

NELSON

At our May meeting David Melville outlined a special project for Bell Island in Tasman involving cooperation with DOC conserving a critically endangered endemic plant (coastal peppergrass) and a colony of Caspian Terns. We do not know how Caspian Terns (and other birds) will respond to the vegetation management / herbicide spray that DOC is undertaking there. We are also working with DOC to monitor the birds of Bell Island shell bank and have initiated a programme of visits starting in late July or early August 2023 before the start of the tern nesting season.

Seven brave souls decided that, despite the weather forecast, it was worth an 'Atlas trip' around the Kohatu-Tadmire-Glenhope circuit on 1/7 to look at some of the region's less atlased, but still easily accessible, country. We met at the Flat Rock Café 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 settled quite low the previous day (some on Hope Saddle). A total of 7 Atlas squares were visited with 34 checklists completed and totals of between 24 and 41 species observed.

Suzie Cunningham, Director of the Fitzpatrick Institute of African Ornithology based at Cape Town University gave a talk that transported us to the exciting world of African birds. The visiting daughter of a Nelson member, Suzie described for us the Cape Grassbird, Orange-breasted Sunbird, Sociable Weaver and Southern Ground Hornbill, and various of the Institute's projects, including on climate change and its impact in the Kalahari Desert.

There will be a photo competition at the Society's 2024 annual conference to be held in Nelson over King's Birthday weekend (1-3 June). Attendees are invited to enter their photos in 4 categories. See page 4 for more details.

– PAUL GRIFFITHS

MARLBOROUGH

On eBird's 16/5 'Global Big Day', 16 Marlborough region members travelled to Kaikoura for a pelagic trip. Conditions were perfect and we spent 4 hours on the water, seeing several species of albatross, petrel and shearwater. Everyone had a fantastic time and there were a few 'lifers' for many on the trip. On the way back to Marlborough we stopped at various birding spots and attempted to break the NZ eBird 'Big Day' species record of 73 species. We got close to it, but in the end, we ran out of daylight and the group ended up with 72 species – just 1 short of Bradley Shields' record!

In June, 6 members surveyed Lake Grassmere for the Winter Wader Count where plenty of waterfowl were seen, including several thousand Australasian Shovelers and good numbers of Grey Teal. There were very few waders, but it was still nice to see a few Banded Dotterels and Pied Stilts.



▲ Albatrosses and Orca, Wellington Branch pelagic trip (6/8): Michael Szabo.



▲ The Marlborough Branch's eBird 'Big Day' recorded 72 species (13/5): Pat Crowe.

Several Marlborough members travelled to New Plymouth for the annual conference, including a handful that gave presentations. Dan Burgin gave an update on the NZ Bird Atlas project and some guidance for the final year of the project, Keegan Miskimmen presented the results of a Black-fronted Tern management project on the Waiiau River, and Sara Larcombe spoke about the work she has been helping with in Taranaki to protect seabirds and shorebirds there. Of course, one of the biggest highlights of the conference was Biz Bell receiving the Robert Falla Award in recognition of her contribution to ornithology through her Black Petrel research, pest eradication work, and as Secretary for the Records Appraisal Committee. Well done, Biz!

At the end of July, our branch hosted its second evening talk with Ralph Powlesland presenting results of what he has observed at his and Mary's block of land at Manaroa in Pelorus Sound. He has been recording there daily for the past 12 years. He spoke about trends he has observed in local population numbers over the years as well as seasonal movements of the different species. There has been a marked increase in the number of Fernbirds observed in recent years which is consistent with Fernbirds being observed in a greater number of wetlands around the Marlborough Sounds area. The talk was intriguing and highlighted what can be achieved by making simple bird observations each day over a long period of time.

- PAT CROWE

CANTERBURY

It has been an autumn and winter of stray grebes with an influx of small egrets. Multiple NZ Dabchicks have turned up with singles at Pegasus Wetlands and an irrigation pond on the Canterbury Plains near Ashburton, and 2 on Lake Forsyth. The latter were keeping company with an astounding 239 Australasian Crested Grebes. On the West Coast, an Australasian Little Grebe was found on Franz Josef's oxidation pond, later joined by a second bird. Little Egrets have been seen on the Ashley Estuary, the Avon-Heathcote Estuary, Lake Forsyth (3), Greenpark Sands, and the remote and seldom-visited Saltwater Lagoon on the West Coast (2).

Cattle Egrets have been present in greater numbers this year than of late. There were 22 in the regular flock near Lakeside (twice last year's flock size), and there seem to have been smaller flocks near Lincoln and Karamea, as well as the semi-regular birds near Waikuku. Two birds were also seen at Wainono near Waimate.

Terns have also featured this winter. A White-winged Black Tern (WWBT) in breeding plumage was seen with a large flock of Black-fronted Terns near Chertsey. Recently, small numbers of WWBT may have bred on braided rivers in the region at Black-fronted Tern colonies, so feeding tern flocks on the Canterbury Plains will probably warrant closer inspection in future. An Australian Gull-billed Tern was seen over the previously favoured Greenpark Sands in July, an Eastern Common Tern was seen off Akaroa Heads, and an immature Antarctic Tern photographed at under-watched Wainono.

The returning drake Northern Shoveler at Pegasus Wetlands remained until the start of June and a drake Chestnut Teal was at the Ashburton River Mouth in late June and early July. We have had some interesting talks and meetings, and an especially fun bird call identification quiz run by Nick Allen. There have also been wader counts, including at the Ashburton Lakes.

- SAMUEL AMARIS

OTAGO

Mary Thompson has been our Regional Representative for 17 years. She has been a wonderful ambassador and cheerful leader for our region, championed numerous projects, and ensured that everything ran smoothly. Mary stepped down in July - Thank you, Mary!

July was the warmest on record in Dunedin. Going into the last winter, 107 Otago Atlas squares had no winter coverage. Members have been working hard and have reduced that to 74 squares, or 78% coverage. Monthly field trips have focused on under-surveyed squares. In May, 19 people went to Pleasant River Estuary and recorded 55 species on eBird's Global Big Day. Otago contributed 66 species records. In June, 12 people visited Hikarorua/Mt Watkins, which included a square that had no winter data, and recorded 19 species. On 5/8 another field trip visited the Pig Root.

Notable records include SIPO heading inland early this year. In May strong winds caused Sooty Shearwaters and Mottled Petrels to 'rain' inland. There were Australasian Crested Grebe at Eweburn Dam, Manorburn Reservoir, and a juvenile at Karitane. A Hudsonian Godwit was seen at 4 coastal Otago sites. An Australasian Bittern was seen near Papatōwai. After a 5-year absence Cattle Egrets were at Inchlutha while a Little Egret and a possible Plumed Egret was seen at Hawkesbury Lagoon and a first record of a Marsh Crake there. There were multiple Kotuku sightings around Dunedin plus 2 sightings of possible NZ Storm Petrels, and an Antarctic Fulmar off Tairaroa Head.

The 29/7 winter wader count recorded a Red-necked stint (Catlins) and 95 Banded

Dotterels (Aramoana), but SIPO numbers were down. There were high counts of Pied Shags from several sites, with numbers seemingly steadily increasing. A successful wetland bird monitoring weekend around Tautuku recorded Marsh Crake. University of Otago environmental group AAPES joined us for Town Belt 5-minute bird counts in July. The 7th season of the Outside Orokonui SI Robin Monitoring will commence in mid-August. Nine Otago members and Otago students brought home Best Speaker and Best Poster awards from the annual conference. Otago also received third prize for the highest regional increase in members and Otago member Nick Beckwith won the best portfolio in the Tara photo competition. From 19/8 there will be a fortnightly SI Robin monitoring trip (contact:gpickerell@outlook.com) and Oscar Thomas has set up a 'Birds Otago' Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/groups/birdsotago/
- FRANCESCA CUNNINGHAME

SOUTHLAND

Our winter wader count was held in fine but cold conditions on 17-18/6 with 7 members taking part. A Black Stilt at Riverton was a nice addition to the list while 5 Wrybill on the New River Estuary was a high count for Southland. Our long-staying Terek Sandpiper also made the list. This bird has now been at the head of Awarua Bay for several years where it has been seen by many birders.

A report via Facebook of 41 Kereru at Milford Sound on 1/4 must have been an amazing sight while an influx of Cattle Egret on Rakiura Stewart Island and in other parts of Southland on 4/4 was a surprise after a number of years of absence. Matt Jones reported a Little Egret on Rakiura on 12/4 which stayed to 18/8. Two more Little Egrets were reported from Waipapa Pt and Te Anau on 14/4.

Paul Sagar reported 4 Eurasian Coots at the Snares Islands on 4/4 and a Plumed Whistling Duck on 7/4. A coot was also seen by Matt Jones on Rakiura. Four Black-fronted Dotterels were reported from the Waimatuku River mouth by Francois Flanagan and a singleton found at Horseshoe Bay on Rakiura by Matt Jones was only the second Rakiura record. At least 11 were seen at Waghorn Rd, Waituna Lagoon, by Glenda Rees on 10/5. Lastly, a large flock of 550 NZ Scaup were counted at Waituna Lagoon by Shaw Heron on 21/5, and a drake Northern Shoveler found by Sean Jacques at Tip Lagoon on 21/5 was the first seen there for nearly 2 years.

- PHIL RHODES

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