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## *Otago Region Newsletter 9/2023*

### *September 2023*



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

### **Ornithological Snippets**

**2 Great Crested Grebes** were at Kaikorai Lagoon on 18 August, with a single there on 9 September, while the regular bird was seen at Katiki Reservoir on 18 August & 3 September. **18 Takahē** were released in the Greenstone Valley on 23 August, with further releases planned for October, and next year. **60 NZ Pigeon** were counted at Makarora on 30 August. **Bar-tailed Godwits** numbered 290 at Blueskin Bay on 18 September. **White Herons** were reported from Kaikorai Estuary on 18 & 22 August, and 9 September, and from Karitane on 25 August. A **Reef Heron** flew across the harbour mouth to Taiaroa Head on 2 September, and a flock of 3 large white birds, possibly **Cattle Egret**, were seen near Dunedin Airport on 21 August. Finally a **NZ Falcon** has been seen regularly at Chain Hills at Inverlief.

Please send any interesting reports to [cluthaphotos@gmail.com](mailto:cluthaphotos@gmail.com)

**Richard Schofield**

## eBird News

We are now well into the final spring of the Atlas, and I believe the weather has been a bit of a mixed bag. Unfortunately I'm not able to produce a needs map at this stage, but will do one for the October newsletter. In the meantime a look at the Atlas effort map will show where coverage is most needed – in all the usual out-of-the-way places. Anyone keen to venture to the Lake Onslow area would have the opportunity to fill in several squares, though this may be better left till a little later in the season. DV31 beyond Pukerangi is untouched at this time of year, and adjacent squares could use some topping up. Elsewhere the gaps are in relatively remote areas, so any visits here would be well appreciated. As ever, get in touch if you would like any specific suggestions for areas to visit, and please be careful.

**Richard 027 281 8701** or [cluthaphotos@gmail.com](mailto:cluthaphotos@gmail.com)

## BirdsNZ Otago Branch News

### Huge 'thank you' to members of Otago Birds NZ

Thanks so much to everyone who contributed so generously towards the very special gifts I was given when I retired as your Regional Rep. I am thrilled to bits with the gifts you chose. The wall hanging is absolutely gorgeous; I have the perfect spot for it and I will enjoy it every day. The super-gloves have touch sensitive finger tips so I can keep them on while eBirding out in the cold - very clever, no excuse now.

Georgina and Bruce obviously put a lot of work in behind the scenes to devise such a splendid card with Craig and Oscars photos, and with messages from so many of my Birds NZ friends, even from UK.



Photo by Katie Gray

I have really enjoyed every minute of my time as RR. I can look back on all the different kinds of events, field trips and birding opportunities that I helped create with some satisfaction. I think all of us have experiences with birds we wouldn't have had, had we not been members of Birds NZ. May there be many more.

**Mary**

## **Dawn Palmer ~ Otago Regional Representative**

I started out in the field of applied ecology after completing a Diploma in Applied Science in Natural Resources in Adelaide. I worked for the Conservation Programmes Division of the South Australian Department of Environment and Heritage (surveying pastoral vegetation remnants across the State and Little Corella in the Flinders Ranges) before bridging up to a Bachelor in App. Sc. In Ecology/ Natural Resources in Canberra in 1987. After a summer contract with the CSIRO Wildlife Division, I backpacked my way around New Zealand in 1988 visiting several tracks that eventually came to form our first Great Walks. I then travelled on to Lake Tahoe, California and lived in the Sierra Nevada Mountains later in 1988. In 1990 found work with the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit (USDA Forest Service) as a wildlife biologist surveying for California Spotted Owls. After a few years of “hooting” and habitat mapping for this species, I moved to New Zealand with my Kiwi fiancé and we’ve lived in Queenstown since early 1993. I found employment with the Department of Conservation in the Whakatipu Area as a Conservation Officer in 1994 and later became the Program Manager for Biodiversity “Assets” as it was known at the time.

I have been a self-employed independent ecologist based in Queenstown since 2002 while raising 2 children with my husband; our youngest is finishing her last year of High School this year. I’ve been a member of the OSNZ since 1998. After keeping an eye on the Australasian crested grebe on Lake Hayes with the late George Chance since 1995, I supported Rosalie Snoyik in coordinating the local effort of the George Chance Memorial Grebe Census in 2004, 2009, 2014 and will do it again for the 2024 census. I’m not yet a certified bander but I have recently registered with the Falcon banding system and have helped with some mohua, shrubland passerine, kea, fernbird banding work in the past.

As a Trustee of the Whakatipu Wildlife Trust since 2020, I’ve been working to introduce people to birding and enable our many community trapping groups to monitor the birds they want to protect. I’m also the ecologist (and soon to be Trustee) for the newly formed Tucker Beach Wildlife Trust who have a restoration & braided river bird protection focus. These efforts provide a wonderful segway and pairing of my interests in birding with BirdsNZ. I look forward to being involved in the many projects (e.g. bittern monitoring) and with the membership of BirdsNZ through my part in the shared Regional Representative role.

I am very grateful that the Regional Representative role will be shared and supported by other members of the existing BirdsNZ Otago Committee and willing members of BirdsNZ Otago. It is a testament to Mary’s effort that a committee is needed to take on her role.

Mary is handing over RR role over the next few months and the transition has begun. Other committee and volunteer members will be continuing in their roles and with their projects.

The Regional Representative Role is therefore very much a team effort shared with:

<b>Bruce McKinlay</b>	Town Belt 5MBC Bittern Inventory Surveys
<b>Dawn Palmer</b>	Emails, Admin, liaison with BirdsNZ, member database & contact details; data archiving for Regional Projects, support/facilitate publications from data etc. Field Trip Coordination – Inland Mountains Bittern Inventory Surveys
<b>Franny Cunninghame</b>	BirdsNZ Magazine reports Bittern Inventory Surveys
<b>George Pickerell</b>	Event/field trip coordination – Dunedin Robin Beyond the Fence Project
<b>Hamish Spencer</b>	Newsletter distribution
<b>Holly Perry</b>	Monthly meeting refreshments
<b>Mary Thompson</b>	Town Belt 5MBC Bittern Inventory Surveys
<b>Oscar Thomas</b>	Monthly Meeting Organiser/Chair – Arrange Speakers, IT/Audio visuals, venue confirmation Otago Birds Facebook Page Administrator
<b>Sue Odlin</b>	Treasurer Newsletter Editor
<b>Richard Schofield</b>	Regional Recorder Atlas Coordinator Field Trip Coordination
<b>Will Perry</b>	New Committee Member
<b>Maree Johnstone</b>	Wader Counts
<b>Suzanne Middleton</b>	Botanic Gardens Guided Birdwalks
<b>Nick Beckwith</b>	Advisory Committee member
<b>Graeme Loh</b>	Advisory Committee member

### **Bird Flu**

Members will be aware that high pathogenicity H5N1 avian influenza has spread rapidly across much of the world in recent years. This has resulted in the deaths of tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of wild birds, in particular seabirds including gulls, terns, shags and penguins. BirdsNZ members, especially beach patrollers, have an important role in surveillance.

If you find any unusual mortality events or see sick birds, especially those exhibiting neurological symptoms (for examples see: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/u9f3jpuy4SKQr1Lw9>) please **contact the MPI hotline 0800-809966 immediately**. As there is a potential risk

that bird flu may be transmitted to humans, please make sure you wait for instructions before handling any sick or dead birds.

For further information see: Bird Flu [advisory for wildlife managers and bird banders - DOC-7109612.pdf \(prod-birdbanding-spa-client-infr-userassetsbucket-1kfkzr4gfqsv0.s3-ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com\)](#) and [High pathogenicity avian influenza and the risk to NZ | NZ Government \(mpi.govt.nz\)](#)

## Flagged South Island Pied Oystercatcher

A recent sighting makes a total of 12 flagged SIPO observed over the last few years. The majority of these observations have been on Warrington Bch with 7 yellow flagged and 1 red flagged birds. 27 observations of these 8 birds with one stand out, Yellow flag EP5, 15 sightings in total across July, Aug, Sept in 2021 then Jan, Feb, May, June and Dec in 2022 with no recent sightings.



Birds sighted away from Warrington Bch were 2 blue flagged birds in the Catlins, 1 yellow flagged bird in Makarora River 2018, and the recent yellow flag at Karitane.

**Nick Beckwith**

## Booming Bitterns and Cryptic Crakes

This is a major project that we will be involved in over the next few years. Otago Birds NZ has signed an agreement with ORC to survey Otago wetlands for presence of bitterns and crakes. There should be opportunities for many of us to take part, either in the field or analysing sound recordings at home and expenses will be fully reimbursed. This survey will be contributing to ORC's overall biodiversity monitoring.



Photo by Mary Thompson

Bittern survey fieldwork will commence in October and run through to December. We need people that have time to travel to wetlands to place automatic recorders in the wetlands and to return 3 weeks later to retrieve the SD cards, replace batteries and redeploy for a further 3 weeks. This may require walking on rough wet ground for up to 4 or 5 km, but mainly on the flat.

It would be great if we have teams of 3 or 4 people who can commit to looking after the survey of a particular wetland, so there is back-up of people who know where the recorders are located. **Check out the locations and dates below and let Mary know how, when and where you can be involved. Email [nzmaryt@gmail.com](mailto:nzmaryt@gmail.com)**

### 2023 Locations

**Akatore Wetland** Sunday October 1  
 Sunday October 22 (Labour Weekend) Field trip for all members  
 Sunday November 12

**Lake Tuakitoto** We need 2-3 people who are free to travel to the lake on week days for this location on at least 2 of these dates  
 Wed October 11  
 Wed November 1  
 Wed November 22

**Waihola/Waipori** We need 1 or 2 people who would be flexible in timing during the weekdays to head out at short notice (weather dependent; probably at least 1 day's notice) to Sinclair wetlands to join a team from Te Nukuroa o Matamata to go by boat into the wetlands to place recorders.

During October. Dates to be confirmed but likely to be 4/ 5 Oct; 24/25 Oct; 14 Nov.

**If you are keen to be part of the bittern survey team, make sure you are added to the Email list to get bittern survey information.**

If you didn't get an email about the bittern surveys last week, then you are not on the mailing list. If you would like to be, please let Mary know [nzmaryt@gmail.com](mailto:nzmaryt@gmail.com)



From Valley Voice, Sept 2023

## DEAR MARY OF BIRDS NZ

I was flicking through the latest edition of Valley Voice and surprisingly I found a letter addressed to me!

Please can members help Mary reply, with comments about falcon behaviour they have observed. Email [nzmaryt@gmail.com](mailto:nzmaryt@gmail.com)

I was unable to attend your workshop in Dunedin on 18 June, but hope you will be interested in my encounter on 9 August with what I am sure was a juvenile falcon. I came upon it at dusk on a narrow bush path tearing into a recently killed wood pigeon, rather larger than itself.

It had a solid dark brown back with lighter speckled body, longish tail and no colour that I could see in the dusk. A short curved beak, quite tall legs, though they might have been extended by the tugging. When it finally acknowledged my presence some 10 metres off it chose not to fly, but to run awkwardly further along the path, alternately hopping and waddling. Rather like a kea.

When it finally took off it was more like a hop into the air, so that I couldn't see under the wings. It then hopped higher, vertically, with just a flutter of wings until it was well over my head, but too dark under the canopy to see the facial features except the small curved beak (no overlapping on the beak like keas). It made a series of 'kuk' sounds which were not quite like a blackbird.

We sat it out for about 20 minutes then it came down in hops and flutters, landing about the same distance away and proceeding in an ungainly manner towards its prey. Punctuated by hops, but seemingly confident. As I had no camera with me and it grew increasingly dark and I left the gory scene after about 10 minutes.

Returning the next day at midday I ran into a closer pile of wood-pigeon feathers, again about 10 metres from the original lot. The path was clear between the two piles, so it was not the original one dragged. Both carcasses had no bones left, but 1 wing on each, one still with meat attached.

High up in the trees was what I think the perpetrator, but it was surrounded by bellbirds and fantails and other small birds going about their business. The Tūi were all singing in the background. This bird looked the same as the night before, but was obviously not a threat. It was going 'kuk-kuk- kuk' like a blackbird, but not. And I could not see its beak profile in the high canopy. Eventually it flew away horizontally. I still couldn't see the wingspan in the canopy.

Now, this is not a bird I have met before, and it answers to the physical appearance of a juvenile bush falcon, but my trusted Falla/Simpson/Turbott makes no mention of the strange gait - stumbling, waddling, hopping - that made the encounter so unique. Can you comment?

**Islay Little**

My Trip Reports
Previous

### Atlas Trip: Pig Root; Morrions

5 Aug 2023 Link-only

Waitaki District, Otago, New Zealand

Mary Thompson

[Share](#) [Edit](#)

The last winter trip for Birds NZ Atlas organised by Otago Birds NZ/Richard. 6 squares had additional species added and two squares had first coverage for winter. Participants: Mary, George, Maree. A falcon with its recent kill, flying off with it at first stop boded well for the day, and scaup and coots at small wetland, considered rare for the area, at the last stop.

31  
Species observed

14  
Checklists

#### Species observed

[Show all details](#)

15	<b>Greylag Goose</b> <i>Anser anser</i> *	<span style="font-size: 18px;">3</span>
79	<b>Paradise Shelduck</b> <i>Tadorna variegata</i>	<span style="font-size: 18px;">7</span>
57	<b>Mallard</b> <i>Anas platyrhynchos</i> *	<span style="font-size: 18px;">6</span>

# BIRDS

## NEW ZEALAND

*Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa*

You can join Birds New Zealand right now for just \$1.50 a week.  
 It costs \$80 a year, and for students it's just \$40 a year:  
[www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/join-now/](http://www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/join-now/)

## JOIN US NOW

<https://www.odt.co.nz/news/dunedin/ornithologist-stepping-down-region-representative>



## Programme 2023

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

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

### A new Zoom link for meetings

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

**The meeting passcode is: 523492**

September, Tuesday 26      Amy Adams  
Management of a critically endangered population of Fairy Terns in Victoria

October, Tuesday 24      Hamish Spencer      Birding in Colombia

October, Sunday 22 (Labour Weekend) Bittern Recorder Servicing at Akatore Wetlands. This is a field trip that all members are invited to come along on. This is a good opportunity to learn more about what is involved. We may also try looking for crakes with call play-back. Car-pooling from outside Bunnings in Otaki Street, leaving at 9am. Bring lunch and refreshments, sunhat and warm clothes and shoes you don't and getting wet. Please let me know if you are planning on coming. Mary [nzmaryt@gmail.com](mailto:nzmaryt@gmail.com) or txt 02102980504

October, Sunday 29      Town Belt Bird Count; 5MBC training day for members of the public in conjunction with City Sanctuary. Meeting in Cobden Street outside Olveston at 10 am. Help from members would be appreciated. Contact Bruce 0273891477 [president@birdsNZ.org.nz](mailto:president@birdsNZ.org.nz)

November, Tuesday 28      Abby Smith will compère the annual Quiz Night

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

Suggestions for locations for field trips and atlassing trips, and offers to help lead trips would really be appreciated, please contact Dawn [birds.otago@birdsNZ.org.nz](mailto:birds.otago@birdsNZ.org.nz)

Contributions for inclusion in the next newsletter should reach the editor by **17 October**  
[sodlin@gmail.com](mailto:sodlin@gmail.com)

### Disclaimer

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