

Birds New Zealand 2023 Conference Experience – Katie Vanderstok

This year, I was awarded the Fledgling Fund to allow me to travel to New Plymouth for the 2023 Birds New Zealand conference. I presented a five-minute 'Speed Talk' and poster, which was my first time ever presenting to a conference audience. It was amazing getting to share my research with so many people and having the opportunity to practice my presentation skills.

It was also wonderful to hear from the wide range of interesting speakers. From distribution modelling to the Wildlife Act to seabird conservation, there was something for every bird enthusiast. I particularly enjoyed the chance to hear from and meet postgrad students from other Universities, who I would have been unlikely to get to know without the conference. I was also able to catch up with a few people from last year's Christchurch conference and make some wonderful new connections.

Outside the conference, I had an amazing time on the field trip to Lake Rotokare. It was inspirational to hear about the incredible work done by volunteers and the Lake Rotokare Scenic Trust to protect and restore the area, allowing several species of rare native bird and reptile to be reintroduced. Some highlights were seeing pāteke/brown teal, miromiro/tomtit, and some very friendly toutouwai/North Island robins. However, the biggest treat of all was catching a brief glimpse of a mātātā/fernbird near the lake. Overall, I greatly enjoyed the conference and am grateful to Birds New Zealand for facilitating my attendance by awarding me the Fledgling Fund.



Katie Vanderstok presents the results of her Master's research on factors affecting antipredator behaviour in the Eurasian blackbird