

# THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND (Inc)

## OSNZ — Birds New Zealand

[birdsanz.org.nz](https://birdsanz.org.nz) and [birdsanz.org.nz/society-publications/notornis/](https://birdsanz.org.nz/society-publications/notornis/)

September 2023



Greetings,

Spring is here! Not only are the daffodils flowering, the first eBird record for shining cuckoo in Wellington region for the new breeding season was lodged today (22<sup>nd</sup> September). Of note in this edition of the newsletter is the report of Birds of Wellington City produced for the Greater Wellington Regional Council by Nikki McArthur, Ian Flux and Annette Harvey. Their report raises some interesting questions regarding the Halo Effect from Zealandia, effects of widespread predator control in the Wellington City region and the vulnerability of some species to predators such as cats which are currently not controlled. The ongoing problems with domestic pets is highlighted by the recent deaths on a Wellington beach of little penguins caused by a dog.

Geoff de Lisle

### Wellington Birds New Zealand Monthly Meetings

We are continuing our hybrid meeting setup, thus, you can join the meeting on the first Monday of the month.

1. In person at the Te Papa Collections Building, 169 Tory Street.
2. Online via the Zoom Meeting via the following link for the October meeting: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83448810783?pwd=bUdVL25iclFYejc4d1dzTThYQnhpZz09>
3. You can join the meeting from 7.30pm and will start at 7.45pm.

Next Monday, the **2<sup>nd</sup> October**, we will have our next monthly meeting, during which we will have another great speaker: **Pascale Lubbe** (University of Otago)! Pascale's talk is titled: **Words on Birds: How New Zealand got its birds**. Pascale states that We often think of New Zealand's birds as deeply endemic, holdovers from a connection to the supercontinent Gondwana, giving rise to the perception of our island home as a "Moa's Ark" - but is this really true? Let's go on a journey through prehistory, explore the origins of New Zealand's iconic birds, and discover the geologically and climatically dynamic world that gave rise to our unique avian assemblage. As usual, this will be a hybrid meeting.

**Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> July, Floreana Mockingbird, Galapagos, Enzo Reyes.** Dr Reyes summarised his PhD studies on the Floreana Mockingbird. He examined demographic parameters of the Floreana mockingbird using models of capture-mark-recapture, as well as the behavioural aspects of sociality and vocalisation that could influence the outcome of its reintroduction. His studies are a guide for the reintroduction of the species to Floreana Island, as well as highlighting the importance of considering behavioural aspects in the translocation plans of endangered species. <https://www.massey.ac.nz/about/news/saving-endangered-bird-species-a-passion-for-phd-graduate/>

**"Exploring threats to seabirds from their own sensory perspective", Ariel-Micaiah Heswall (University of Auckland)** was the title of her the online talk. Seabirds are one of the most at-risk animal groups having a plethora of threats impacting them including fishing vessels, plastic and light pollution. Her aim is to research these threats from a sensory ecology approach where she explores how the seabird views the threat to understand why it is a threat.

**Monday 7<sup>th</sup> August, Alice Pereira, "Conservation of albatross and petrels in Brazil".** Alice Pereira is the Curator of Brazilian albatross and petrel sample bank and technical consultant for Projeto Albatroz). Alice gave **an overview of research and conservation carried out in Brazil on albatross and petrels**, including beach patrols, bycatch mitigation, sample collection and the Brazilian National Plan of Action.

**Monday 4<sup>th</sup> September, Duncan Watson, New Birding App.** Duncan introduced a new Birding App he developed for Android devices. The App covers all avian species in the world and utilises the GPS facilities on phones. The Android app can be found at <https://nzbirding.com/worldbirds/> which has the link to the files on the Google Drive. Installation isn't hard, but does require manual downloading of the files and installation.

**Zealandia, Danielle Shanahan, Chief executive Zealandia, presented three recent developments from the sanctuary.**

- The major restoration project with the eradication of perch from the lower lake using the poison rotenone. The lowering of the lake and the poisoning of the perch appears to have had no determinantal effect on the resident shags. After the eradication a picture was taken of a shag with a relatively large "pink" fish whose identity has yet to be established.
- Zealandia staff observed a temporary decline in 2017 in all bird species while carrying out the 5 minute bird counts previously instituted by Wellington Birds New Zealand (OSNZ). This decline was reversed in subsequent counts.
- The pine project. This is a long-term excise to remove the large number of pine trees in the sanctuary. A new approach to the removal of the trees is **veteranisation - trees are damaged in order to start the process of decay and 'ageing'**.

**Zealandia, Colin Miskelly** described the results of a study conducted with Ben Bell and Dallas Bishop summarising counts of the birds associated with the two lakes and wetlands. Major changes since the construction of the fence include:

- Large decrease in the number of black-backed gulls.
- The establishment of a colony of nesting pied shags.
- Pateke (brown teal) introduced into the sanctuary increased and then appear to decline. Pateke inhabit the bush as well as the lakes.
- Mallard – no impact of the establishment of the fence. However, a decline in mallard numbers was recorded in the last series of the OSNZ counts. The study has been submitted to Notornis for publication.

## Welcome

We warmly welcome the following new members in the Wellington region: Max Richardson; David Alderman; Joe Turner-Steele; Dominic Ward; Jennifer Lowe; Claudia Duncan; Sally Eyre; Janice Swanwick; Lane Gordon; and Bryn Sheppard.

Johannes Fischer (Wellington Regional Representative)



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## Te Papa Blogs

### Birds of the Great Walks of Aotearoa New Zealand

[Colin Miskelly](#) On: 16 Jun 2023. This blog introduces a series of 10 blogs on the birds of the Great Walks.

Aotearoa New Zealand has many great walks. However, as of 2023, only ten of them qualify as capital-letter Great Walks. Te Papa natural history curator Dr Colin Miskelly has walked (or paddled) them all and kept records of the birds that he encountered along the way. In this initial blog in a series that will cover them all, he describes what Great Walks are, and the system that he developed to compare and rank their birdyness.

<https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2023/06/16/birds-of-the-great-walks-of-aotearoa-new-zealand/>

Great walk	Rank	Points	Link
N track	1	61	<a href="https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2023/08/25/birds-of-the-heaphy-track/">https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2023/08/25/birds-of-the-heaphy-track/</a>
Milford track*	2	56	<a href="https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2023/08/18/birds-of-the-milford-track/">https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2023/08/18/birds-of-the-milford-track/</a>
Kepler track	3	56	<a href="https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2023/08/11/birds-of-the-kepler-track/">https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2023/08/11/birds-of-the-kepler-track/</a>
Rakiura track**	4	50	<a href="https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2023/08/04/birds-of-the-rakiura-track/">https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2023/08/04/birds-of-the-rakiura-track/</a>
Paparoa track	5	50	<a href="https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2023/07/28/birds-of-the-paparoa-track/">https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2023/07/28/birds-of-the-paparoa-track/</a>
Routeburn track	6	47	<a href="https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2023/07/21/birds-of-the-routeburn-track/">https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2023/07/21/birds-of-the-routeburn-track/</a>
Abel Tasman coastal track	7	45	<a href="https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2023/07/14/birds-of-abel-tasman-coastal-track/">https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2023/07/14/birds-of-abel-tasman-coastal-track/</a>
Lake Waikaremoana track	8	40	<a href="https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2023/07/07/birds-of-lake-waikaremoana-track/">https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2023/07/07/birds-of-lake-waikaremoana-track/</a>
Tongariro Northern Circuit	9	32	<a href="https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2023/06/30/birds-of-the-tongariro-northern-circuit/">https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2023/06/30/birds-of-the-tongariro-northern-circuit/</a>
Whanganui Journey	10	30	<a href="https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2023/06/23/birds-of-the-whanganui-journey-great-walk/">https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2023/06/23/birds-of-the-whanganui-journey-great-walk/</a>

\*The Milford Track scored the same as the Kepler Track, but edges ahead on a tie-breaker due to the potential to see the ‘deep endemic’ Rock Wren | Pīwauwau on the McKinnon Pass, and several additional endemic shorebird and waterfowl species.

### What makes a great walk a Great Walk?

The Department of Conservation developed the [Great Walk](#) network in order to promote some of Aotearoa New Zealand’s most iconic back-country routes, and also to manage demand for them through a booking system.

**The scoring system** – Based on Level of Endemism Each bird species was assigned a score between 5 (if it is a member of an endemic order) and 0 (if it is considered identical to populations found in other countries). The six levels of scores are: 5 = endemic Order, 4 = endemic Family, 3 = endemic Genus, 2 = endemic Species, 1 = endemic Subspecies, 0 = not endemic at any level.

\*\*The Rakiura Track scored the same as the Paparoa Track, but edges ahead on a tie-breaker due to the potential to see additional endemic seabird species offshore, including Yellow-eyed Penguin | Hoiho and several albatross species. If Ulva Island is added to the score, the endemic bird score would be a league-leading 66 points!

## Forensic photography applied to forest ecology

By: [Colin Miskelly](#) , On: 19 Sep 2023

This blog provides the background to the recent paper Pure, G.A. & Miskelly, C.M. 2023. [Riflemen \(tītītipounamu, \*Acanthisitta chloris\*: \*Acanthisittidae\*\) eating seeds of silver beech \(tawhai, \*Lophozonia menziesii\*: \*Nothofagaceae\*\). \*Notornis\* 70: 139–142.](#) Most notably the blog describes how modern photographic equipment can provide new information such as rifleman eating beech seeds. The paper is based on 800 photographs.

Total squares	105
Total Checklists	49776
Average checklists / square	474.06
Atlasers	454
Species observed	154
*Includes the Wairarapa and Wellington regions.	

## Wellington Region\*

### Summary (to 20 Sept, 2023)

For news on the New Zealand Atlas project visit their facebook page,

<https://www.facebook.com/NZBirdAtlas/>

**Supporting atlasing efforts in the Wellington and Wairarapa region:** This is the final atlas year and there are certainly some squares left that could use increased attention in the Wairarapa and Wellington region across all four seasons ( <https://ebird.org/atlasnz/effortmap>). Therefore, Birds Wellington has made the decision to open up **a small project support fund** for the next year (i.e., until 31 May 2024) for those who wish to go out there and fill those atlas squares. You can apply for this fund by submitting an expression of interest to me.

Expressions of interest should contain an action plan detailing:

1. the atlas squares targeted,
2. during what season,
3. at what level of effort,
4. at what costs.

Together with a small committee (participation in which I am also seeking interested volunteers), I will

allocate funds to different applications in order to maximise the atlas output for our two regions. I have been in contact with the Wairarapa RR (Oliver Druce) and once expressions of interests have been assessed, plans will be communicated with Oliver as well to improve the collaboration between our regions. Oliver has been so kind to provide me with some suggested areas to target:

- Ngawi and Cape Palliser: Certainly, needs more effort including anyone who could tramp into the Aorangi mountains parts of which have extensive bush.
- White Rock and Tora: We will be making a dent on these next month, but more effort is needed.
- Hinakura and Pahaoa River: The road may still be closed, so the only access a long trip over Admiral Hill, so perhaps left till later in the year.
- Te Wharau to Flat point, Glendhu and Honeycomb rock: Great opportunity for a trip picking up squares on the way in combination with a walk to Honeycomb rock.
- Riversdale Castlepoint and Mataikona: Lots of possibilities especially on the way.
- Through Pongaroa to Akitio and Herbertville: Almost no effort in most of this huge area.

In summary, there are still considerable areas that would benefit from increased atlasing effort, so we are keen to support you filling those blank spots on the map. Please consider applying for support from us and getting out there. Looking forward to receiving your expressions of interest and if you would like to volunteer to help coordinate these efforts, please do let me know as well!

**Johannes Fischer, Regional Representative** [birds.wellington@birds.nz](mailto:birds.wellington@birds.nz)

## Wellington Regional Council – Wellington City Birds.

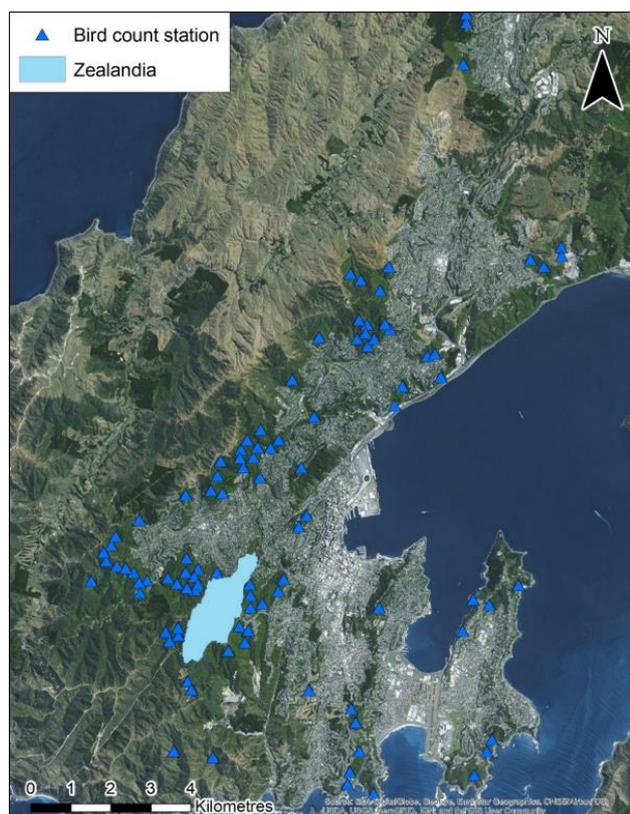
<https://wellington.govt.nz/-/media/news-and-events/news-and-information/news/files/2023/wcc-bird-monitoring-report.pdf?la=en&hash=ED7DAC9861B5E884F2F0BAC1566142BB6A06BB94>

In May 2023 the Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) published a report on Wellington City Birds written by Nikki McArthur, Ian Flux and Annette Harvey. The report analyses a series of 5 minute birds counts conducted at 100 locations (map right) for the GWRC between 2011 and 2022. Additional information analysed was eBird and iNaturalist records. Some important findings and questions arise from this study.

- the average number of native bird species being counted per bird count each year has risen by 41% (2011-2022)
- the average number of introduced bird species being counted per count has increased by 47% (2011-2022)
- Between 2011 and 2022, average annual counts of kākā have increased by 260%, average annual counts of kererū have increased by 200%, average annual counts of tūī have increased by 85% and average annual counts of pīwakawaka / New Zealand fantails have increased by 49%. Over the same time period, average annual counts of tauhou / silvereyes have declined by 9%.

Factors involved in the spread of birds in Wellington City:

- The establishment of Zealandia and the spread of birds from the sanctuary – the Halo Effect.
- The introduction and establishment of bird species in Zealandia which had disappeared from the Wellington City region.
- The increasing extent and intensity of predator control/eradication in Wellington City.



### The Halo Effect

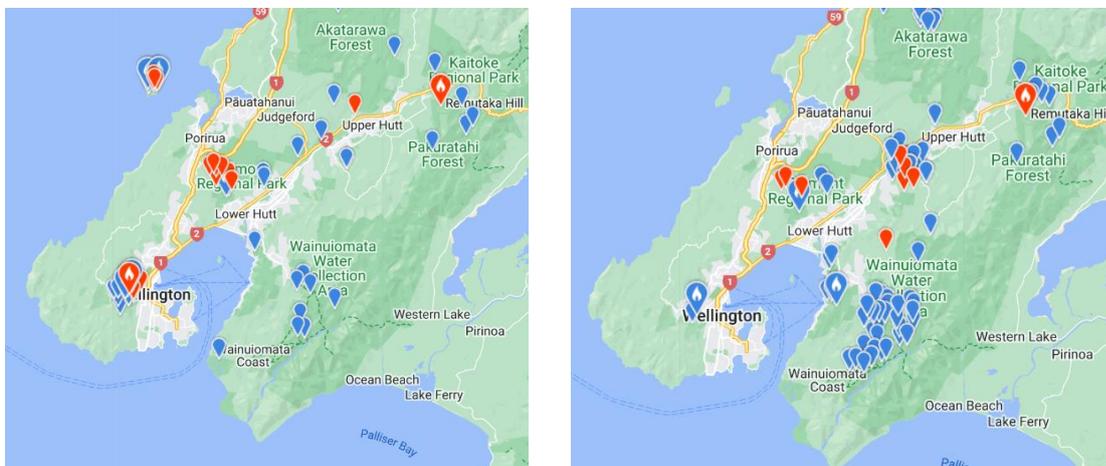
*The predator-free Zealandia Te Māra a Tāne sanctuary is having a measurable ‘halo’ effect on native forest bird communities throughout Wellington City. The average number of native bird species recorded per five-minute bird count station declines with increasing distance from Zealandia Te Māra a Tāne’s predator-proof fence. An average of 6.8 native bird species has been recorded at count stations closest to Zealandia Te Māra a Tāne’s boundary between 2011 and 2022, whereas an average of only 4.6 native bird species were recorded at those count stations situated furthest from Zealandia Te Māra a Tāne’s boundary over the same period.*

The following group of native birds species introduced into Zealandia have had a limited spread beyond the sanctuary.

- Whitehead, well established in Zealandia but limited spread beyond the fence.
- Tieke, well established in Zealandia but restricted to forested areas 1-2km from the fence.
- Hihi, not well established in Zealandia or outside the fence.
- Tomtit. Introduced into Zealandia but failed to establish a permanent population. Very rare in Wellington City.
- Robin, well established in Zealandia. Limited distribution outside the fence.

- Red-crowned parakeets. *Kākāriki / red-crowned parakeet encounter rates have not changed significantly between 2011 and 2022, but have varied between a low of 0.01 birds counted per five-minute bird count in 2011, 2012 and 2013 and a high of 0.09 birds per count in 2015 and 2019*

There are some interesting differences between the forest birds in Wellington and those in Hutt Valley/Eastbourne/Remutaka. For example, whitehead although they are plentiful and self-sustaining in Zealandia there has been limited spread or establishment beyond the fence. In contrast, self-sustaining populations of whitehead occur in the Hutt Valley/Eastbourne/Remutaka and they occur in the presence of predators. The question arises as to whether the Hutt Valley/Eastbourne/Remutaka whitehead have over the years adapted their behaviour to reduce the impacts of predators. The whitehead in Zealandia were sourced from predator-free Kapiti Island and had no learned experience of predators. Tomtits were introduced into Zealandia but did not persist, probably mostly due to competition from other forest birds such as robins. The question arises as to why tomtits have not established outside the fence at Zealandia in Wellington City. The source birds from Zealandia came from areas with predators and there are self-sustaining populations of them in the Hutt Valley/Eastbourne/Remutaka.



eBird maps of checklists recorded in 2023. Left, whitehead; Right, tomtit.

An important observation of the report by McArthur et al. is, *“Evidence is growing that cats are now the most significant predator of native birds in Wellington City.”*

*“For example, of 23 kākāriki / red-crowned parakeets that were recovered dead outside of Zealandia Te Māra a Tāne’s predator-proof fence between 2010 and 2016, nine of these birds (39%) had been depredated by cats (Irwin & Empson, 2022).”*

## Citizen Science

*“Citizen scientists are playing an increasingly important role in providing bird observation data that complement the GWRC Wellington City five-minute bird count dataset, enabling us to map the distribution of birds in Wellington City to a level of detail never done before. A total of 95,761 verified observations of native forest birds have been contributed by citizen scientists in Wellington City between 2011 and 2023 and are included on the distribution maps in this report. Ninety-three percent or 89,104 of these observations have been contributed via the New Zealand eBird database, making eBird by far the most popular database used by Wellington-based citizen scientists that have an interest in birds. A further 6% (6,204 observations) were submitted via the iNaturalist New Zealand database, making this the second most preferred database used by Wellington-based citizen scientists. An additional 1% of records (574 observations) were sourced from the Great Kererū Count.”*

## Recommendations from the Report

- That this five-minute bird count monitoring programme be continued on an annual basis, to provide a consistent, repeatable measure of the state and trends in the diversity, distribution and abundance of birds in Wellington City parks and reserves
- That local citizen scientists continue to be encouraged to contribute their bird observations by submitting them in the form of complete bird checklists to the New Zealand eBird database.
- That Wellington City residents continue to be educated about the risk that domestic cats pose to the city's wildlife, and options continue to be explored to manage the risk that domestic, stray and feral cats pose to native and endemic birds in Wellington City.
- That a citizen science project be carried out with the aim of mapping the distribution of ruru / morepork in Wellington City during the summer of 2023/2024.

## East Harbour Banded Dotterels

The MIRO banded dotterel project led by Parker Jones is once again monitoring the breeding success of birds on the Eastbourne beach, Lake Kohangapiripiri (Pencarrow Lake) and Baring Head. In addition to MIRO, the dotterel team includes HEM and Birds New Zealand members. The first chicks for this season have hatched and now they face the major challenge of avoiding various predators before they fledge. An important part of the project is banding and flagging birds by Richard Gray - adults are banded on nests and chicks are banded before they fledge. The following are a couple of examples of what can be learnt of the movement of banded/flagged banded dotterels.

**PAP** a flagged male arrived back in Eastbourne on 15<sup>th</sup> August 23 having spent his fourth winter in New Caledonia. While PAP was with other banded dotterels in New Caledonia none of them included birds flagged in the East Harbour. (Picture, non-breeding plumage, 9/3/2022)

**PHE** a female banded at Eastbourne as a Juvenile on 12/1/21. She was seen at Ration Point (Pauatahanui) on 9/3/21, at Kohangapiripiri (Pencarrow Lake) on 5/8/21 and at Eastbourne 21/8/21 with chick at the beach by the Eastbourne Sports and Service Club. On 25/12/21 she was



back at Kohangapiripiri and again on 31/1/22. She was at Eastbourne on 17/7/22 and 20/9/22. PHE had a successful nest at the Pencarrow Lighthouse beach 8/10/22 but none of her 3 chicks fledged. This was the first nest since 2016 at the Lighthouse area. She was seen at Ration Point again on 27/2/23 (Raewyn Empson) and 14/4/23 (Dallas Bishop, picture). PHE is currently nesting on the Eastbourne beach (September 23).

## Cook Strait Pelagic Bird Trip, 6<sup>th</sup> August 2023

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of August Wellington Birds New Zealand (OSNZ) held a very successful pelagic bird watching trip in Cook Strait. A full complement of 20 members were hosted by Jono Delich from Cook Strait Fishing Charters ably assisted by Tane. We left the Seaview Marina at 7.00am in light winds and moderate seas. A plentiful supply of chum attracted a good range of birds, including 6 different albatross species with Salvin's mollymawk the most common seen, followed by black-browed mollymawks. The avian highlight of the trip was the sighting of an Antarctic fulmar which is a rare visitor to our region (see below).

Colin Miskelly's eBird checklists below record the totals and include multiple photographs. A major highlight of the trip was the close encounter with three orca, an adult male and female and a juvenile. The juvenile swam close to the boat a number of times. One of the orca was feeding on a large fish, most probably a groper.

Many thanks to Michael Szabo and Johannes Fischer for organising the trip and to skipper Jono of Seafarer II for providing his roast chicken lunch. More Cook Strait trips are planned and are highly recommended, especially for those with good sea legs.

Little Penguin	Australasian Gannet
Southern Royal Albatross	Southern Black-backed Gull
Northern Royal Albatross	Red-billed Gull
White-capped Albatross	White-fronted Tern
Salvin's Albatross	Pied Shag
Black-browed Albatross	Little Pied Shag
Buller's Albatross	Little Black Shag
Northern Giant Petrel	Variable Oystercatcher
Antarctic Fulmar (1)	
Westland Petrel	Marine mammals:
Cape Petrel	Orca (3)
Fairy Prion	NZ Fur Seal (1)
Fluttering Shearwater	

<https://ebird.org/atlasnz/checklist/S146561138>

<https://ebird.org/atlasnz/checklist/S146561295>

<https://ebird.org/atlasnz/checklist/S146561415>

<https://ebird.org/atlasnz/checklist/S146561523>

A further pelagic bird watching trip in Cook Strait with Phil Battley and colleagues on the 26<sup>th</sup> August found a similar mix of species to the Wellington Birds New Zealand trip. The notable exception being the absence of an Antarctic fulmar.

<https://ebird.org/atlasnz/checklist/S148150422>

Pictures (top to bottom): Tane attracting birds; Buller's mollymawk; white-capped mollymawk with Salvin's mollymawk behind; orca surrounded by Cape petrel.

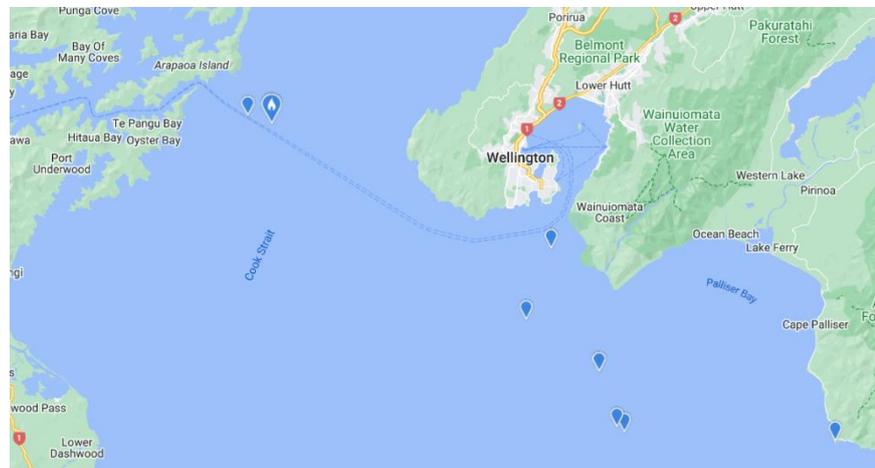


## Antarctic Fulmar

*“The Antarctic fulmar is a medium-sized fulmarine petrel with a rather gull-like appearance. However, its flight is more like that of an albatross, flapping, gliding and soaring over the waves on long stiff wings. It is a circumpolar colonial breeder on the coasts of Antarctica and adjacent glaciated islands, including Balleny, South Sandwich, South Orkney, South Shetland and Bouvetøya. Antarctic fulmars’ nest on cliff ledges up to 200 m above the sea; along with the Cape petrel and Antarctic petrel (which often nest nearby), it is among the few petrel species that are true cliff-nesters. Antarctic fulmars range across the Southern Ocean. In summer it is one of the commonest birds of circumpolar pack ice. Its winter range extends well north of Antarctica into subtropical seas, including New Zealand waters, and it sometimes reaches tropical waters off the coast of South America.” NZBirdsOnline*



The map shows the sightings of Antarctic fulmar listed in eBird (2013-23). Two of the sightings are from the Wellington Birds New Zealand (OSNZ) pelagic trip on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August.



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Regional Recorder: Peter Hodge [peter.hodge@gmail.com](mailto:peter.hodge@gmail.com)

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Matiu / Somes Island survey, Shane Cotter, [heather.shane@xtra.co.nz](mailto:heather.shane@xtra.co.nz)

Newsletter, Geoff de Lisle, [osnzwell@gmail.com](mailto:osnzwell@gmail.com)

## Bird Snippets

### Wellington City biodiversity Cirl bunting

**Colin Miskelly** » Sat Jul 22, 2023

Female cirl bunting feeding on freshly-sown grass seed with house sparrows and one yellowhammer at Prince of Wales Park, Mt Cook, Wellington. Recognised as likely cirl bunting (cf. female yellowhammer) when side-on 5 m away, as no chestnut was apparent on the sides of the rump. Rump confirmed to be olive-coloured when it flew.

This is the second cirl bunting I have seen in suburban Wellington (the other was in Khandallah about 20 years ago), but I have seen them more recently on the Wainuiomata coast and on Mana Island. BirdingNZ.net

### Okupe Lagoon, Kapiti Island Brown Teal

Colin Miskelly, 29<sup>th</sup> Jul, 2023. Sixteen brown teal recorded on the Okupe Lagoon – one pair and a flock of 14. <https://ebird.org/atlasnz/checklist/S145871851> This is the highest count in eBird of brown teal on Kapiti Island. The next highest count also on the Okupe Lagoon was 10 on 24/1/2022.

### Otari – Wilton Bush, rifleman

**Michael Szabo** » Fri Jul 28, 2023 3:54 pm

Tim Park reports seeing Rifleman at Ōtari-Wilton's Bush yesterday, "Below the lookout near the Nikau/kowhai trees". BirdingNZ.net

### Lowry Bay, black-billed gull

**SomesBirder** » Mon Sep 04, 2023 11:33 am

This morning I saw what might have been a Black-billed Gull at Lowry Bay, Eastbourne. I did not have my camera with me at the time, so these record shots that I took with my phone were the best that I got of it. BirdingNZ.net

### Waiotauru Track, Akatarawa, red-crowned parakeet

Jan Keast, 29 Aug, 2023. Red-crowned parakeet flew up from 4wd track, perching on low bare branch about 12 metres from me, where it remained for 2 - 3 min allowing very good look of all features including crown and red mark behind eye. 100% sure red-crowned, not yellow-crowned. Bird silent throughout. No bands. Contacted Staglands who confirmed it was not an escapee from there. Also reported 6 tomtit.

<https://ebird.org/atlasnz/checklist/S148357249>

### Zealandia Takahe

29 Aug, 2023, They're here! Takahē pair Waitaa (F, 3yrs) and Bendigo (M, 6yrs) arrived from Burwood Takahe Breeding Centre yesterday and are settling into their new home in the upper valley.

The birds were welcomed to Zealandia Te Māra a Tāne alongside Taranaki Whānui ki Te Upoko o Te Ika, Ngāti Toa Rangatira and Ngāi Tahu representatives.

Huge thank you also to the [Department of Conservation](#) (Takahē Recovery) and [The Hem of Remutaka](#). Zealandia, Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/Zealandia/>

### Matiu / Somes Island, Royal Spoonbill

Birds New Zealand survey team. 9/9/23 Spoonbill observed on the top of Shag Rock. DOC ranger reported that spoonbill (3?) had also recently been seen on Mokopuna island, the small island just north of Matiu /Somes Island. Photo, Dallas Bishop.

<https://ebird.org/atlasnz/checklist/S14940939>



## A Chaffinch and the Mirror Test

For the last three weeks a male chaffinch (pictured) has been pecking at windows at our home in Upper Hutt. This behaviour occurs throughout the day. One assumes that the bird is attacking its reflection which it assumes is a competing male. This behaviour has been observed in a number of different avian species. Recently a peacock from Staglands, Akatarawa attacked its reflection on a shiny BMW causing minor damage.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/300968442/plucky-peacock-attacks-wellington-mans-bmw-after-seeing-reflection>

A similar attack has been reported from the UK where a peacock caused hundreds of pounds of damage to another shiny BMW. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-derbyshire-64629037>



*The mirror test—sometimes called the mark test, mirror self-recognition (MSR) test, red spot technique, or rouge test—is a behavioral technique developed in 1970 by American psychologist Gordon Gallup Jr. as an attempt to determine whether an animal possesses the ability of visual self-recognition.*<sup>[1]</sup> Wikipedia.

Clearly our chaffinch would fail the mirror test. A limited number of mammals and birds have passed the mirror test. The first bird to pass the mirror test was the Eurasian magpie in 2008. A more recent study has failed to replicate the results of the previous study. Some of the most intelligent birds such as grey parrots and the New Caledonian crow have failed the mirror test. No evidence of mirror self-recognition was observed in kea in a 2019 study (van Buuren et al., 2019).

*The MSR test has been criticized for several reasons, in particular because it may result in false negative findings.* Wikipedia

Van Bruuen et al., (2019) Behaviour 156, 763-786. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26737872>

Wikipedia, Mirror Test, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mirror\\_test](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mirror_test)

Geoff de Lisle & Dallas Bishop

## The Capital Kiwi Project is at Makara Cemetery.

[reSodpnsotg 1 3m51 tp94572eae425g7mre 21:7tMa40b1Sgm3ail31Ph](https://www.instagram.com/reSodpnsotg13m51tp94572eae425g7mre21:7tMa40b1Sgm3ail31Ph) · [Wellington](#) ·

Kiwi footprints, Mākara Cemetery, 31 August 2023 — \$2 coin for size ref  
(Good spotting Judith)

In 2018, when the project kicked off, designer Tyrone Ohia created Capital Kiwi's footprint tohu (logo) to help inspire the mission. These are the kupu (words) that accompanied its launch:

"The Capital Kiwi Project aims to return kiwi to the wild in Te Upoko of Te Ika a Maui / Wellington. The large-scale conservation project is owned by community, landowners and kaitiaki – by you.

The footprint is an aspirational mark in the ground. It echoes back to Tāne Mahuta, it contains our kiwi DNA, and marks a future where kiwi share this whenua with its namesake again.

Tihei mauri ora, go kiwi!"

Five years later, we're very pleased to be delivering real-world imprints of the tohu in the paru (mud) of Pōneke. (Great to see the nearby kiwi awareness signs up in the cemetery too

· September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Last weekend Willy, Jeff and the team ran 63 local dogs through the Kiwi Avoidance Training (KAT) course at the depot. Roughly split between new dogs and refreshers, our tally of Mākara doggos KAT-trained stands at 130+, including all the working and hunting dogs in the release area.

[rsodenptSo175541t7ltugt0 7mar00b1teahS7m6t:1tcp16ee6tcP0M](https://www.instagram.com/rsodenptSo175541t7ltugt07mar00b1teahS7m6t:1tcp16ee6tcP0M) · [Wellington](#)

Capital Kiwi Facebook

## **Penguin deaths stop work on \$312m shared path**

**September 5, 2023**

Construction on part of the biggest infrastructure project underway in Wellington (Petone to Ngauranga cycleway) was stopped, following the death of three penguins.

<https://www.thepost.co.nz/a/nz-news/350066540/penguin-deaths-stop-work-312m-shared-path>

<https://www.newshub.co.nz/home/new-zealand/2023/09/wildlife-experts-call-for-justice-after-little-blue-penguins-found-dead-at-wellington-cycleway-construction-site.html>

## **Little blue penguins found dead, mauled by dog at Wellington beach**

*July 5, 2023— "On their Facebook page, Forest and Bird - Places of Penguins posted photos of the brutalised birds at Oruaiti reserve, saying it was likely a dog that killed them. "A necropsy performed by the vets at Wellington Zoo revealed catastrophic internal injuries and multiple puncture wounds, indicating the cause of death matched that of a dog attack," the post read. The pair were male and female, with Forest and Bird saying they were a "healthy" weight and likely to be getting ready for the upcoming breeding season."*

<https://www.1news.co.nz/2023/07/05/little-blue-penguins-found-dead-mauled-by-dog-at-wgtn-beach/>

## **Little penguin found dead Lyall Bay**

**September 10, 2023**

This individual was picked up by a Wellington City Council Park Ranger on September 10th 2023.

The bird has been taken to Te Kōhanga/The Nest at Wellington Zoo to be necropsied.

As expected, the necropsy showed severe internal damage - resultant of a vehicle strike.

iNaturalist. <https://inaturalist.nz/observations/182681899>

## **Little penguin found dead Seatoun**

**August 9, 2023**

This individual was found by a member of public and reported to DOC on August 9th 2023.

There was a metal flipper band present - P53827 (number reported to the NZNBBS by DOC). The bird was a male banded as a chick on Matiu-Somes Island in Dec 2021.

The bird has been taken to Te Kōhanga/The Nest at Wellington Zoo to be necropsied.

The necropsy showed both feet had multiple tears and grazes, and both wings were bruised with the left wing grazed and skin torn. The bird had bilateral pulmonary haemorrhage.

Based off the nature of the wounds a road traffic accident is the most likely cause of the trauma

<https://inaturalist.nz/observations/177458939>

## **Little penguin injured Kaikoura**

**August 2023**

A flipper-banded little penguin P-52049 was found on a Kaikoura beach with nasty wounds from a dog-bite in the area of the right eye. The bird was sent to the South Island Wildlife House and is now blind in one eye and cannot be released back into the wild. P-52049 has been transferred to the Antarctic Centre in its new role as an advocacy penguin. P-52049 was banded as a chick on Matiu / Somes Island in a nest box (NP34 20/11/2022).