

Gisborne Atlas Toi Toi Wines Expedition 2023

By NZ Bird Atlas Team | March 17, 2023



Kirsten Olsen gathering Atlas data in Gisborne © Stephen Legg

We have held off from sharing this Gisborne Atlas trip report out of respect for the trauma the region has recently undergone because of Cyclone Gabrielle. We wish the community a speedy recovery and are particularly thinking of those local to the area who were involved in this Atlas trip. If you can, we encourage you to donate towards relief funds such as New Zealand's Disaster Fund through the Red Cross [here](https://www.redcross.org.nz/support-us/our-current-appeals/new-zealand-disaster-fund/) (<https://www.redcross.org.nz/support-us/our-current-appeals/new-zealand-disaster-fund/>). Extreme weather events like these wreak havoc across the country and can turn people's lives upside down. Your generosity and kindness can make a huge difference!



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[\(https://www.redcross.org.nz/support-us/our-current-appeals/new-zealand-disaster-fund/\)](https://www.redcross.org.nz/support-us/our-current-appeals/new-zealand-disaster-fund/)



Surveying the coastline © Keegan Miskimmin

Gisborne has long been an under-surveyed area for this and previous Atlas projects, and so it was with great excitement when a group of enthusiastic Atlasers were able to the East Cape region to gather some vitally important bird observations for the Atlas project. The trip would not have been possible without the kindly donated funds from Toi Toi wines, who are helping fund at least 6 Atlas expeditions across the country to help gather data and fill in the gaps.



Malcolm Rutherford surveying the valleys below © Keegan Miskimmin

The East Cape is renowned for its diverse birdlife and landscapes, and the group of 16 aimed to increase diurnal and nocturnal effort around Ruatoria and Tikitiki for the Summer Atlas season across as many grid squares as possible. The trip coincided with a long weekend, thereby giving the group three days to survey

the myriad habitats, including forests, beaches, rivers, and river mouths, and document the various species of birds they detected by sight and/or sound. The group were also encouraged to Atlas during their journeys to and from Gisborne as there are still many areas around the East Cape that are in need of some Atlasing love!



The stunning coastlines of the East Cape © Keegan Miskimmin

Originally scheduled for November 2022, this was a second attempt to get a group of passionate Atlasers into the region. Concerns about the weather were rife, particularly considering the recent floods from Cyclone Hale. The group were lucky this time, getting some great weather over the long weekend. Based out of Tikapa Marae the group managed to fan out and survey surrounding areas as best they could using public access routes and roads that were safe to drive on post flooding. The enthusiasm from the group was clear from the offset not letting the recent effects of recent floods that had devastated the area impact their ability to cover as much ground as possible. Each evening the group would consult the Effort Map as well as Topographic maps to plan out the next day's activities for each group to best target all the possible habitats and balance spending as much time in each square and covering as much ground as possible.



Malcolm and Keegan planning the following day's activities © Stephen Legg



One of the many beautiful habitats surveyed by the group © Malcolm Rutherford



East Cape vistas © Malcolm Rutherford

After each day of birding the group loved the sense of community and camaraderie when gathered each night to discuss the day's observations and enjoy a meal together at the marea. This is often part of the allure of these expeditions, being surrounded by people who share that same passion and buzz from seeing birds and supporting the Atlas efforts together as a team.

Come Monday the three-day Atlas expedition came to an end with an incredible amount of effort and bird species compiled into the Atlas eBird portal. Many within the group continued to Atlas on their way home helping fill in even more of the effort gaps in the surrounding area. On trips like these, it is always impressive to see how much can be achieved by a small group over such a short period of time. Key summary statistics from the trip are presented below.



The group surveyed in a variety of habitats © Malcolm Rutherford

Summary Statistics from the Trip:

- 16 Atlasers gathered a total of 423 checklists over the week period of 1-7 February 2023
- 30 Atlas grid squares received data.
- Over 71 hours of Atlasing/birding effort were put in by the group!
- 69 species were detected including migratory species such as koekoeā/long-tailed cuckoo, and nocturnal species such as ruru/morepork.
- More details are available in the [eBird Trip Report \(https://ebird.org/atlasnz/tripreport/105073\)](https://ebird.org/atlasnz/tripreport/105073).



This hard-working group helped gather scientifically valuable data for a very under-surveyed area to better understand what bird species are present, and in what numbers. A huge thanks go to Malcolm Rutherford (Gisborne Atlas Coordinator), Keegan Miskimmin, Geoff Foreman, Raewynn Foreman, Stephen Legg, Kirsten Olsen, Pauline Priest, Ray Priest, Isabel Castro, Yi Luo, John Kyngdon, Bryan McCavana, Erin McCavana, and Amanda Hunt for all their Atlasing efforts and gathering such an impressive dataset over the long weekend and the days either side. Many thanks to Graeme Atkins for allowing the group to stay at Tikapa Marae. And finally thank you to Toi Toi wines for allowing this trip to happen by providing the funds to offset the costs associated with the trip. The funding helped absorb many of the costs associated with accommodation, food, fuel and travel expenses for the group.



Gisborne Atlas Expedition Group February 2023 © Stephen Legg

This trip provided a means for passionate Atlasers and BirdsNZ members to support the Atlas project and this under-surveyed region. It also provided the opportunity for many of the group to Atlas in a totally new area of the country. We also know that in the process, several new Atlasers were upskilled in both bird ID and eBird through the experience and we hope they all continue to upload their bird observations to eBird as part of complete checklists, up to and beyond the Atlas finishing in June 2024.

We were lucky to have timed this trip just before the events of Cyclone Gabrielle and know it will take a long time for the region to fully recover after this. We continue to advocate for the Atlas community to survey this region if they can before the project finishes next year, and also to donate to the relief fund options available such as the Red Cross.

