

West Coast Atlas Toi Toi Wines Expedition

October 2023

Originally featured [online here](#).



The Atlas team ran a [Toi Toi wines](#) funded Atlas expedition to the West Coast this October Labour Weekend. The key aim was to increase day and night effort across as much of the areas close to Hokitika as possible. We had an amazing response with over 20 people registering and what a fantastic effort from the entire group!



The group of keen Atlasers met on the Friday evening at Hokitika Holiday Park, with members coming from Dunedin, Christchurch, Blenheim, Nelson and several spots along the West Coast itself. Members got in to the Atlasing spirit before the big weekend by Atlasing along their routes helping to fill in some of those gaps before the big weekend had even started! The plan was simple: to split up the group of 20 over Saturday and Sunday into small groups, targeting sets of grid squares with little to no effort in them and undertaking as much birding as possible. Nocturnal effort was of course encouraged, as was trying to bump up effort hours and species totals for as many grid squares as possible. After the original West Coast expedition was cancelled last year due to heavy rainfall, the Atlas team were over the moon to see that no rain was forecast for this Labour Weekend and a solid weekend of Atlasing could finally commence!



Tara/white-fronted terns. West Coast. © Oscar Thomas

Saturday

After catching up with everyone on Friday evening, the teams were established for the day and everyone was up and ready to Atlas. They split up into around 6 groups, with vehicles heading in various directions to target those undersurveyed areas. Places such as Ahaura, Blackball, Dunganville, Turiwhate, Lake Kaniere, Kokatahi River, Fergusons, Waitaha River, Herepo and more were visited, with teams spending as much time as they could to collate as many bird observations in as many of the different habitats they encountered. The weather was fantastic with periods of sunshine warming the crew as they Atlased. A notable highlight was some of the group getting access to see the [Plumed Whistling-Ducks](#) near Reefton, with Oscar Thomas and Bradley Shields both getting fantastic shots of the birds. These birds are vagrants from Australia and small flocks have occurred at least eight times since 2000. Most sightings have been in Western New Zealand, with some birds also having reached Hawke's Bay and Chatham Island. You can read more about this species [here](#).



Stephen Legg traversing a fence to join Kirsten Olsen as they Atlased. © Sam Ray



Plumed Whistling-Duck © Bradley Shields Macaulay Library

The fun didn't stop after the sun went down, with groups targeting [kororā/little penguins](#) along the coast near Hokitika, and others targeting [rorora/Great Spotted kiwi](#) or [ruru/morepork](#) north of Hokitika.



Ruru/Morepork. West Coast. © Oscar Thomas

Sunday

Keen to make the most of the weather being so kind again, everyone was able to get another great day of Atlasing done on Sunday. Groups began to venture north towards Reefton and focused on under-surveyed areas near Mawheraiti, Maimai, Gloriavalle, Buller Creek Road, Cronadun, and Inangahua. One group explored a rarely visited Saltwater Lagoon between Hari Hari and Whataroa. The lagoon is huge and a special West Coast experience with a challenging track punctured with numerous boggy bits, windfalls and interesting stream crossings. This is one of the few places [tītīpounamu/riflemen](#) still exist close to sea level.



The rarely visited Saltwater Lagoon between Hari Hari and Whataroa. © Nick Allen



Keegan Miskimmin and Kirsten Olsen Atlasing with their NZ Bird Atlas shirts on. © Stephen Legg

After hard days out Atlasing, the group very much appreciated the opportunity to catch up with each other and share their stories from the day over a glass of wine. The Toi Toi wines team were incredibly kind in not only providing funding for the trip, but also bottles of Toi Toi wine for the group to enjoy!



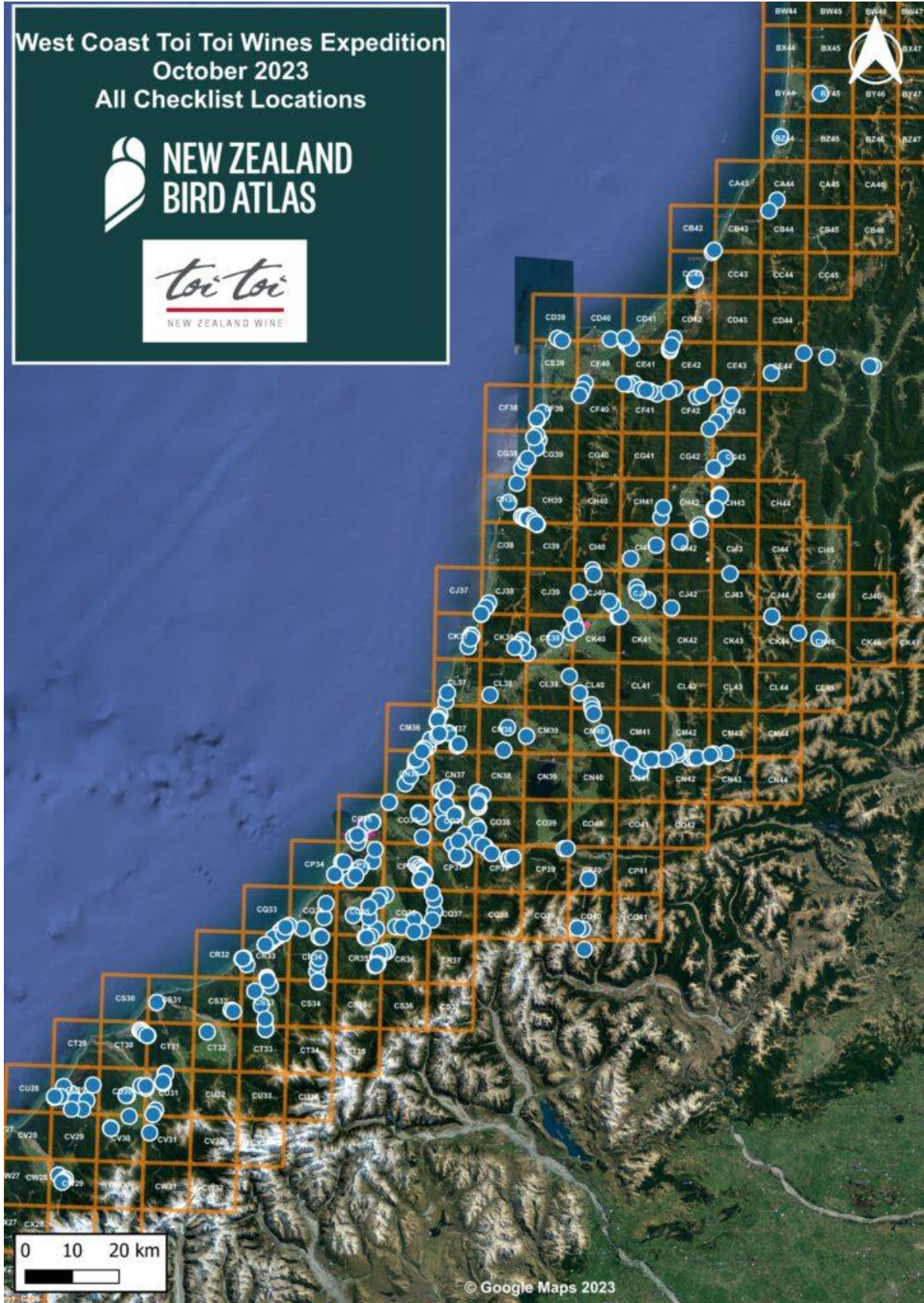
Stephen Legg and Kirsten Olsen enjoying Toi Toi wine after a hard day Atlasing! © Stephen Legg

Monday

With spirits high after plenty of Atlasing the group ventured back to their various home bases on the Monday, with some Atlasing along the way of course! Overall, the Atlas team couldn't have been happier with the result. Over 105 Atlas grid squares received data over the 72 hour period, and an impressive dataset was collated in an undersurveyed, and sometimes very hard to survey region. See below for a map showing all of the checklist locations from the expedition, and showcasing the impressive spread that the group managed to achieve.

West Coast Toi Toi Wines Expedition
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 All Checklist Locations





You can view the rest of the effort via our [Trip Report here](#).

We are over the moon with the groups achievements. A huge thanks to our hardworking group who gave up their long weekend to gather this valuable Atlas data. They included: Arna Carlson, Marilyn

Court, Sharen Graham, Mats Olsthoorn, Richard Nichol, Stephen Legg, Kirsten Olsen, Oscar Thomas, Janina Castro, Lily Eagen, Ela Hunt, Serge Crottaz, Charlotte Crottaz, Bradley Shields, Nicholas Allen, Rachel Taylor, Zachary Thomas and Janet Newell. We can't thank you all enough for coming together and helping support this initiative. It was great to share birding knowledge and work together on this. As always, a big thanks to Toi Toi wines for their generous sponsorship that made this expedition possible and the kindly donated wine too!



Some of the West Coast Atlasing group from left: Oscar Thomas, Ela Hunt, Keegan Miskimmin, Bradley Shields, Sam Ray, Nick Allen, Serge Crottaz, Charlotte Crottaz, Janet Newell, Sharen Graham, Mats Olsthoorn, Marilyn Court and Rachel Taylor

There are still gaps and undersurveyed areas remaining on the West Coast, so we really encourage you to Atlas the West Coast and visit yourself if you get the chance. If 20 people can cover over 105 grid squares, and gather over 520 checklists over a 72 hour period, imagine what we as a community can achieve nationwide in the final 7 months of the project. As always we encourage you to continue to Atlas across the country wherever, and whenever you are to help us finish the project strongly!