

KUAKA



Welcome to the newsletter of the South Auckland Branch of Birds NZ

Te Kahui Matai Manu o Aotearoa

Issue 52 – **JANUARY 2024**

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Hello everyone, trust you like the new format for Kuaka. After four years, it was time to move a bit more up-market. Inspiration for the layout came from the UK publication "Waterbird News".

The two photos above are of different species (yes, of course you knew that!). On the left is a pair of grey teal/tete-moroiti, relaxing at Wattle Downs in December. On the right is a NZ dotterel/tuturiwhatu chick at Big Bay (Awhitu), also in December.

Our first meeting for 2024 will be our AGM on Tuesday 20th February at 7.30pm, followed by a general discussion of what we have seen/done over the holidays. Note the change of date as Wendy and Sue will be away on the 13th

We have several field trips coming up in February and March, see the programme on the next page. If you would like more details, or to let us know you will be coming, please contact Sue

PROGRAMME FOR 2024

Monthly Meetings: held on the second Tuesday of each month, at the Papakura Croquet Club, 1 Chapel Street Papakura. Meetings start at 7:30. Visitors welcome. \$3.00 donation to cover costs please

Feb 20	AGM	Note change of date (not the 13 th)
Feb 24	Sanctuary Mountain	Field trip with Waikato Branch
Mar 9/10	Tapora on the Kaipara Harbour	see note below re this field trip
Mar 12	Monthly meeting	details TBA
Mar 16/17	Dotterel flock counts	See note below re this count
Mar 17	SeaWeek walk	see flyer on page 8
Apr 9	Monthly meeting	details TBA
May 14	Monthly meeting	details TBA

FIELD TRIP TO TAPORA ON THE KAIPARA HARBOUR

Saturday 9 and Sunday 10 March. We will take a walk at Atiu Creek regional park on Saturday, stay overnight, then join Auckland branch members to do a count of NZDotterel post breeding flocks on Manakapua Big Sand Island on Sunday.

Accommodation options:

[Tapora Campground \(TePuni\) \(taporacamping.co.nz\)](http://taporacamping.co.nz)

[Ātiu Creek campground \(aucklandcouncil.govt.nz\)](http://aucklandcouncil.govt.nz)

Please contact Sue if you intend to join us for this weekend or have any questions

POST BREEDING NZ DOTTEREL FLOCK COUNTS

Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 March (and Friday or Monday if required)

Auckland's east coast and the Coromandel Peninsula. We already have people to cover the sites in South Auckland, but if you are interested and available to count at any of the following Coromandel sites, please let Sue know ASAP.

Colville Bay
Matarangi Spit
Coromandel Harbour
Buffalo Beach, Whitianga

Hot Water Beach
Tapu, Thames Coast
Pauanui
Whangamata

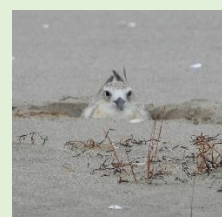
Did you know...?

On 10 November 1951, Sir Hugh Beaver, then the managing director of the Guinness Breweries, was hunting gamebirds in the North Slob, County Wexford, Ireland. After missing a shot at a Golden Plover, he became involved in an argument over which was the fastest gamebird in Europe, the Golden Plover or

the Red Grouse (it is the plover). He couldn't find a reference book that answered the question – so in 1954 he created his own. Thus, the *Guinness Book of Records* was born.

NZ DOTTEREL/TUTURIWHATU

A photographic essay from our Awhitu Correspondent, Kate, who was sitting a few feet away watching the goings on and photographing the action.



The first 3 photos are Mr D making the nest. He started doing his scraping bit, tried it out for size and then took off opposite direction from her (She was quite a bit further away to the right, watching).



As soon as he had left, she came across, gave it a quick look over, squatted and popped out the egg. Kate couldn't believe it! They then did a quick fly around together and returned to the 'nest'.

All over in about 20 minutes. Two days later there were two eggs



SANDPIPER SIGHTING AT MEREMERE IN DECEMBER 2023

In mid-December three of our members ventured back to the wetlands near Meremere, determined this time not to get bogged in the chest-high grasses as we did back in October!

First stop was the ephemeral lake near beside the old power station. The main species present were 157 grey teal/tete-moroiti, Canada geese/kuihi, swans/kakianau, 51 Spur winged plover, shovelers/kuruwhengi, pied stilts/poaka, and 12 spoonbill/kotuku ngutu papa.

We were thinking of moving on when a wader was observed pecking about in the mud.



Initially misidentified as a sharp tailed sandpiper, we quickly revised that to pectoral sandpiper. Two ebirders who visited the site a couple of days later found two of the manu and were able to take a few more photos.



Pectoral sandpipers differ from sharp-tails by having white bellies and a clear line between belly and speckled chest as is clearly seen in the final photograph

Overachiever birds that broke world records: Longest toes, loudest call, fastest

With roughly 10,000 bird species worldwide, according to some estimates, here's a look at five that have achieved record-breaking feats.

Longest bird toes: According to Audubon, the Northern Jacana, a marsh bird a little larger than a bellbird (but smaller than a tui), has the longest toes of any bird, relative to body size. The jacana, which is found from Mexico to Panama, has four nearly 7.62cm long toes long to help them walk on water through balancing on floating plants and lily pads.

Loudest call: The white bellbird has the loudest bird call ever documented, according to a paper published in 2019 in the journal Current Biology. Native to the rainforest of the Guianas, Venezuela and northern Brazil, the mating call of a male bellbird averages out at a peak of around 125 decibels, beating out rock concerts, chainsaws.

Longest non-stop migration by a bird: In 2022, a juvenile bar-tailed godwit broke the record for the

longest non-stop migration by a bird. The bird, B6, flew 13,575km from Alaska to Tasmania without stopping for food or rest. The journey, studied by a team of scientists from the U.S. Geological Survey, the Max Planck Institute, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, started in October and continued for 11 days and one hour.

In 2007 E7 flew from Alaska to NZ, non-stop, 11,680km and took 8 days and 4 hours.

Longest time to take first flight: Wandering Albatross chicks take more than nine months to make their first flight. That's more than an average of 280 days, compared to the weeks it takes some other species. Because it takes so long for the young albatross to achieve this, adults breed only once every two years.

Fastest diving bird: The peregrine falcon is the fastest diving bird ever recorded, with speeds clocked at up to 320kph.

Reference: USA TODAY Sept 20, 2023

A PRICKLY ENCOUNTER IN WHAKATANE



Mike Ashley dashed to get his camera when he spotted this young karearea inspecting a hedgehog in his backyard in Whakatane. The hedgehog ignored the manu and continued on its way.

Story from Predator Free NZ.



Highlights from the latest issue of the **NZ Falcon Survey newsletter** No 22, December 2023

The falcon survey has been in existence for 17 years and plans to be around for at least another three.

All sightings reported to the survey are also uploaded to ebird.

Website: www.nzfalcon.org.nz

Some NZ Falcon Snippets

Liquorland New Plymouth – a juvenile female karearea chased a feral pigeon into the Liquorland branch in the CBD in July 2023. Both birds spent the night in the building before eventually managing to make their own way out after the music and lights were turned off and all windows and doors opened.

Hastings Golf Course – the NZ falcons nested on the Hastings Golf Course, with two chicks in early November 2023.

Dive-bombing Reports for South Island – A man and his dogs, were vigorously dive-bombed by two adults and there were three chicks in the nest in November 2023 near Longwood Forest in Southland.

Two walkers on the Pareora Dam Walkway, near Timaru on 9 November 2023 when dive-bombed twice whilst walking to and from the dam site.

In addition, two karearea were seen near Wanaka, four near Takapau in the Hawkes Bay, another two

seen in Southland, singles seen at each of Kaikoura, Lower Hutt, Wellington, Tauranga and two more single sightings from the Hawkes Bay.

Feral Cats and NZ Falcon

As NZ falcon mainly now tend to nest mostly on the ground the chicks are especially vulnerable to predation to a number of predators that include cats, ferrets, and stoats. There is a video on the Department of Conservation website that shows a cat attacking chicks in a nest, the video is about half way down on this page and has no sound: <https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/nativeanimals/birds/birds-a-z/nz-falcon-karearea/>

After releasing this female from the cat trap below, the manu then entered a second cat trap 20 minutes later. This picture was taken at Mt Cook Village and shows that karearea can sometimes be their own worst enemy



Photo: Dave Dittmer

PIED STILT AND GREY TEAL ENCOUNTER AT WATTLE DOWNS

It was a quiet day at the ponds where Michael took this series of photos. The teal were making the most of the relaxing atmosphere



.....then an intruder invaded the personal space of one of the pairs



.... they voiced their indignation at the interruption to their day; don't think the stilt noticed!





Āwhitu Coast Care 2024 Seaweed Walk

SUNDAY 17 MARCH 10:30AM

To Irwins Gap via Āwhitu Heights Farm

Thanks to Ron, Adam and Thom for allowing access
to this unspoilt Gap

**Talk by Blue Float
- proposed offshore
Wind Farm**



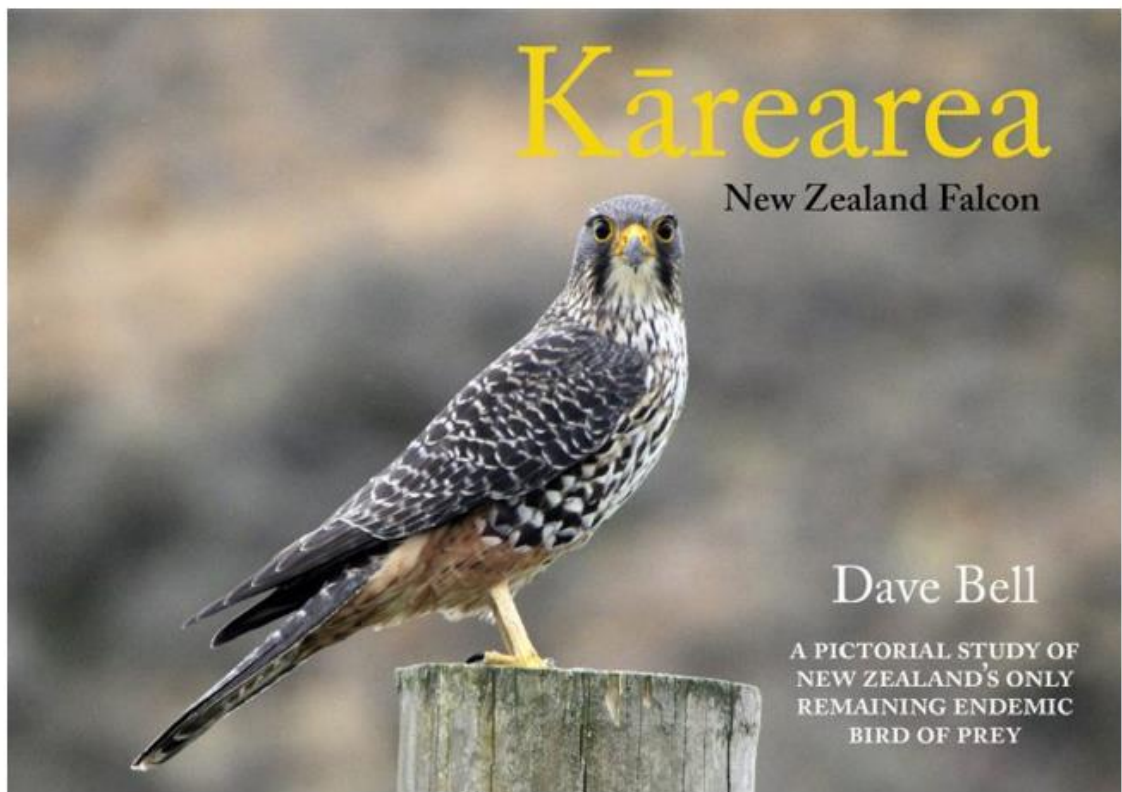
**Parking - by barn, J Irwin Road,
off Manukau Heads Road.
Look out for signs.**



**This walk is hilly and requires moderate fitness.
Please bring your own sturdy footwear, weather
appropriate clothing, drinking Water and Picnic.**

**Walk to Gap - BYO Picnic Lunch, Beach Clean
(gloves and bags supplied by Seacleaners)
Dogs allowed BUT MUST BE ON LEADS at all times.**

**Keep in touch with Awhitu Coastcare FACEBOOK
PLEASE register to walk: kohekohestud@xtra.co.nz**



This is an A5 landscape 80 page book with photographs on one page and a small amount of explanatory text on the facing page.

The book is designed as an awareness and educational resource. \$23.00 plus P&P

Email: nativebirds@xtra.co.nz

Website: www.nzfalcon.org.nz



Spotted shag/kawau tikitiki near Kaiaua

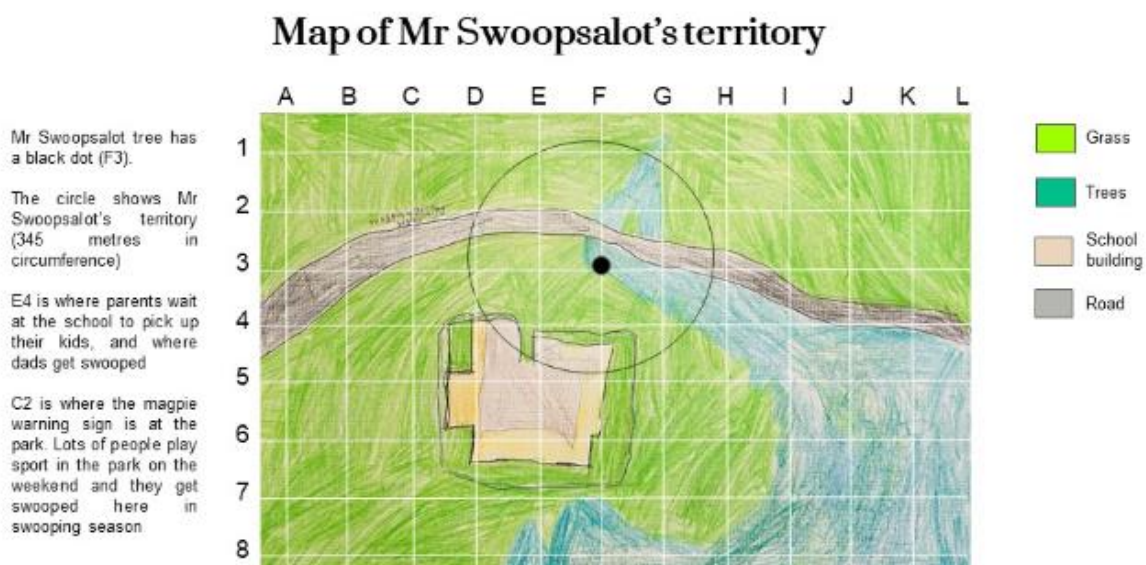
MAGPIES SWOOP BALD MEN MORE OFTEN, EIGHT-YEAR-OLD'S VIRAL SURVEY FINDS

Community science helps us unlock some pretty quirky aspects of the natural world, and those discoveries often come from unlikely places.

Take year 3 student Emma Glenfield, who started with a simple question about magpies and wound up conducting some cutting-edge research almost by accident. One day while she was watching her school's resident magpie, Mr Swoopsalot, terrorising students, teachers and parents alike, a question struck her: "Why do magpies swoop?"

"He's been coming to school for a long time and he's been swooping all the dads," Emma said. "I noticed that and I wondered why. Who do they swoop, where do they target?"

Emma's teacher, Luke Carr, thought those questions would make an excellent maths project. So, armed with her questions Emma went into the field - the Blue Mountains Grammar School – Mr Swoopsalot's territory.



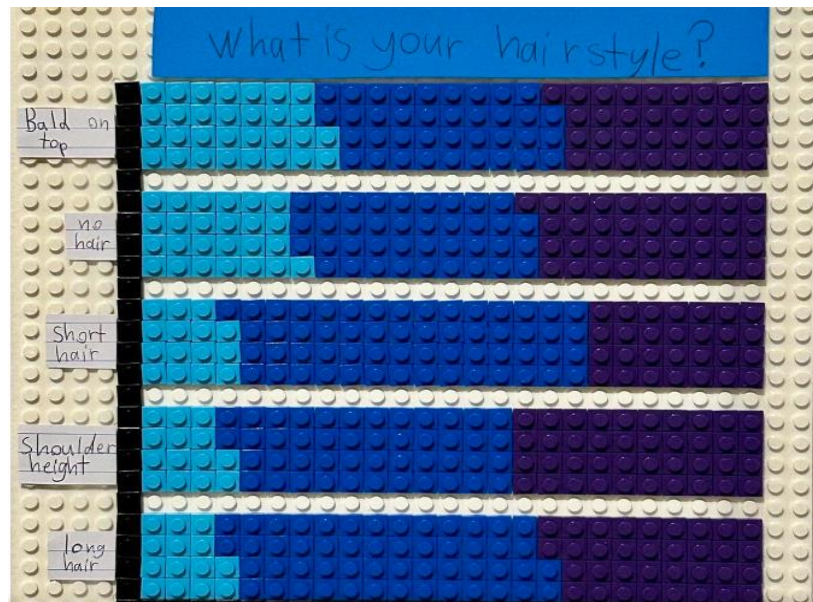
A map of Mr Swoopsalot's territory, which was part of Emma's project. (Supplied: Emma Glenfield)

"I watched the people he swooped and I recorded it, then I got everything I recorded and I figured out that they [the people Mr Swoopsalot swooped] were male, they were tall, and that they had thin or receding hair."

With help from mum, Emma set up an online survey and printed out flyers with a QR code, then she hit the local park and asked strangers to fill it in. She also asked students and teachers at her school. Emma asked respondents how old they were, how tall, what their hairstyles were, how much they weighed, and whether they were hurt as a result of the swooping - there were 150 students and teachers who completed the questionnaire.

But of course, it didn't end there. The following day it had gone viral. Over 30,000 people participated in the survey! So, what did Emma find?

Being eight years old and not familiar with Excel spreadsheets just yet, Emma found a special way to present her data using Lego. And it turns out, her hypothesis was right. The data shows very clearly — in Lego — that men with less hair are getting swooped more often.



Lego data showing hairstyles in relation to magpie swooping frequency. (Supplied: Emma Glenfield)

According to magpie expert Darryl Jones, professor emeritus at Griffith University, it's the first time anyone has ever examined the link between magpie swooping and appearance. And the number of respondents to Emma's survey also dwarfs anything researchers have ever been able to gather.

The sample size is so big that Emma and her mum worked out that her results have just a 1% margin of error, and Professor Jones is now combing through the data to work out what else he can discover.

Emma's survey also asked respondents to rate magpies out of 10 - as it turns out, everybody loves magpies as much as Emma does. "People who have been swooped and hurt, swooped and not hurt, or never swooped, love magpies," Emma said.

And so, from a small village in the Blue Mountains to the far reaches of the globe, Emma Glenfield's curiosity not only solved a mystery, but united thousands in their love for magpies.

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Hope you enjoyed the read. Don't forget to check out our Facebook page

