

# KUAKA



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

Te Kahui Matai Manu o Aotearoa

Issue 53 – FEBRUARY 2024

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Hello everyone, you may have noticed that this issue of Kuaka is a little later than usual. I trust you will find it is still worth reading.

The two photos above were taken by Michael. On the left we have a male shoveller. On the right is a male white fronted tern trying to impress a female with a fish offering (she wasn't impressed!).

**Our next meeting will be on Tuesday  
12th March at 7.30pm**

We have several field trips coming up, 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

<b>Mar 9/10</b>	Tapora on the Kaipara Harbour	see below
<b>Mar 12</b>	Monthly meeting	
<b>Mar 16/17</b>	Dotterel flock counts	see below
<b>Mar 17</b>	SeaWeek walk	see flyer on page 8
<b>Apr 9</b>	Monthly meeting	details TBA
<b>May 14</b>	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 NZ dotterel 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

## WHAT IS THAT???



What is that?



Looks interesting .....



wonder if it is edible .....



worth a closer look? .....



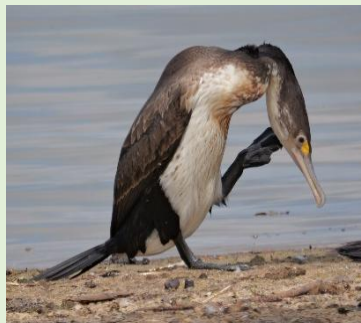
Hummm .....



Yuk!



...that was disappointing...



...tasted terrible ....



Hope no one was watching!



**Predator Free**

**Miramar**

Suggested for you · Steve

Rencen · 4d ·

[Join](#)

Trialing a new way to attract rats to the PFM traps



## BEACH PATROLS

### SET NETS AND AT-RISK SHAG SPECIES IN LOWER FIRTH OF THAMES (FOT)

Our regular beach patrols have mostly been carried out on west coast beaches but a couple of recent beach patrols on the western shore of the FOT have shown an interesting trend, which is raising concerns for all five shag species that forage in the Firth.



Two years ago, a flounder fisherman was seen to discard pied shags caught in his net with no attempt to free them early to prevent them drowning.

Another interesting find has been small caches of young hammerhead shark who are known to give birth to their young in the same shallow waters, which also seemed unusual.

There have also been two spotted shag (SS) carrying transmitters recovered in the since late Dec 2023, one on the eastern shore in the FOT north of Thames.

The other was a bird drowned and then carried back to a boat ramp and dumped inland. Its DOC leg band was removed and has not been handed in. These were part of Matt Rayner's study on the species in the Hauraki Gulf where their numbers have been steadily declining over recent years and are currently classified as 'threatened'. The loss of these two birds is a major concern, and events surrounding their deaths, indicates they too are coming into contact with set net operations.

This beach wrecked spotted shag was picked up on 13 Nov 2022 at Tararu, north of Thames. Another possible victim of set net activity?



We know, from Matt's work tracking SS, that they forage deep into the southern part of the FOT, particularly around the mouth of the Waihou River in areas where set netters work.



There are favoured rock stacks on the eastern shore just north of Thames where SS can be easily seen roosting.

Though no little black, black or little shag have been picked up in beach patrols recently, they too are also at-risk species, the latter two do breed in the lower FOT, and little shags can be found breeding among pied shag colonies lining the mature mangroves of the Piako River and selected sites in trees along state highway 25 north of Thames.

**If you get the opportunity to do beach patrols in the southern parts of the FOT you will be adding valuable information to what little we have thus far.**

Tony Habraken



## CUCKOO AND THEIR FOSTER PARENTS



When I saw this photo of a European meadow pipit (*Anthus pratensis*) feeding its foster child, a European common cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*), I thought "this situation is a bit unfair".

Pipit = 18 gms  
Cuckoo = 110 gms



Then I did a bit of research:



The long-tailed cuckoo/koekoea (*Eudynamys taitensis*) parasitises whiteheads, brown creepers and yellowheads.

Whitehead = 18 gm  
Cuckoo = 125 gm

The shining cuckoo/pipwhararua (*Chrysococcyx lucidus*) prefers the grey warbler and Chatham Island warbler.

Grey warbler = 6.5 gm  
Cuckoo = 23 gm



Research has revealed that the feeding effort put in by the meadow pipit for its one foster child is somewhat less than the effort that would have been expended to feed its own brood of four (sorry, didn't note down the details of the research paper and now, of course, I can't locate it).

I was unable to locate similar research on our cuckoo and their foster parents but guess it is safe to assume that something similar applies.



### **BANDING NOTE FROM TONY H**

On 4 Feb at Kaiaua a small group of 33 white fronted terns had gathered at the creek mouth and among them was no other than D-166768.

It was only 15 days since its previous sighting on the west coast and it was now back on the east coast, a great result getting a same season crossing. In addition, it just extended its own longevity record by 15 days.



### **OTHER SIGHTINGS REPORTED AT THE LAST MEETING**

- flock of 328 SIPO seen on the playing fields at Waiuku college
- 19 NZ dotterel, including two youngsters, and 252 pied stilts, amongst other birds, on Pararekau Island
- An African collared dove/barbary dove and 16 cockatoo seen at Kaiaua in January
- Five NZ dotterel chicks flagged at Clarks Bay
- 10,000 knots seen at Kidd's
- A long-tailed cuckoo and a redpoll reported from Managatawhiri Dam
- Around 60 pairs of black-billed gulls and 90 pairs of WF terns were nesting at Duder's in December, but sadly a dog got into the area and killed many of the tern chicks!

### **NELSON CONFERENCE**

The organisers are planning to run a session of five minute 'soapbox' talks, with a maximum of five sliders per speaker.

If you are intending to attend the Conference and would like to speak about some aspect of our local activities or your own bird speciality, please let Sue know.



# **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](mailto:kohekohestud@xtra.co.nz)**



## YOU KNOW YOU ARE A BIRDING FANATIC IF...

...you breast feed your young daughter in a locked hide while watching birds. -- *Joan Thompson*

... someone is trying to sell you some swamp land in a 3rd world country and you actually are interested!

...you want badly to sign onto \*every\* RBA list on internet, but you don't because of the frustration level of reading about birds you want to see, but can't. --*Ken Gale*

---when your early-rising non-birding spouse awakens you at 4:00 AM to tell you that there is an owl (Great Horned) on the rooftop next door, & you happily thank him for doing so! My father's comment on being told this incident was, "You two deserve each other!" --*Linda Lee Baker*

...you cut up your old field guides to make flash cards, but then use them so much that you learn the characteristics of the cards instead of the birds (e.g. "a left-facing flying duck is a female Lesser Scaup")

...(similarly) you listen to bird tapes in your car so much that you learn to identify the Rock Wren as "the bird after Yellow Breasted Chat"

**...you insist on correcting people who say "sea-gull"**

...the most prevalent feature of your wardrobe is bird tee shirts

...your friends say that you are starting to look like a bird--*David A. Jaffe*

... your rheumatologist gauges how well/poorly you're doing by the amount of time spent birding! --*Noreen*

- when you and your spouse are all dressed up to go to a symphony concert, the phone rings and the spouse comes back with the command: put on your wellies there is a purple gallinule down at the marsh. (You make it at least for the second half of the concert).--*Theo Hofmann*

...when your kids call your car a "BIRDMOBILE" because the trunk is filled with all the things you might need at a moment's notice for a rare bird chase. --*Joyce A. Hoffmann*

...your car sports bird related vanity plates. --*George Dremeaux*

...your parents take you to show you the burial plots they have purchased and you are very pleased to see that there are 10-12 sandhill cranes wondering among the grave sites. "Oh, Mom & Dad will surely be happy here..."

--- on a business trip you tell your coworkers you are going to look for the blue-footed booby, and have to bring in a field guide to prove to them you are not making this up.

--- you carry binoculars in both cars in addition to a pair in the kitchen to watch out your window as you eat breakfast as well as the "good" pair tucked away in your backpack.

--- you have coworkers calling you on the phone to come by their office to id a bird out their office window.--

-- you scrounge around to find a baby monitor to set up OUTSIDE to listen to the birds in the kitchen.

... you take your binoculars and field guide to bed with you, so you can identify the birds you see in your dreams.

...your license plate IBIRD matches your e-mail address.

....you are divorced because your spouse said "It's either me or the birds" and of course you chose the birds. --

...your teenage daughter says "Daddy, how come on the three times we've ever been to Texas we never have time to see the Alamo, but we always have time to visit those sewage ponds (Hornsby Bend)?" --*Chris Hepburn*

... you raise mealworms just to feed birds!--*Laura Erickson*

...your most significant relationships are with people you unexpectedly yet repeatedly encounter along otherwise deserted roads.

...your idea of a good time is writing documentation for the rarity you saw last weekend.

...you get up earlier on weekends to go birding than you do during the week to go to work.

...you subscribe to birding periodicals originating in countries other than the one in which you currently reside.

...your idea of recreational reading used to be novels and poetry but is now treatises on seabird identification.

...you check out an eligible person's optics, not his or her physical attributes.

...you hear a crime story on the local news and say, "Isn't that where we had the Lincoln's Sparrow that time?"

...you're hopeless at remembering people's names, yet you know the scientific names of all birds ever seen in North America.

...you're driving down a country road on a summer day, the radio on. The windows are rolled down and a brisk breeze is blowing past the car. The car is making all its habitual noises. You and your companion are chatting about your favourite albums of all time. An airplane drones overhead. You and your companion suddenly say, "House Wren!" in unison, then both of you realize that you didn't consciously hear the bird. You both have just entered the Birding Fanatic Zone.--*Jennifer Hanson*

--you don't close your garage during freezing weather so the birds can sleep in your coolers stored there. The loss of heat is phenomenal.

--you don't let your kids wear the knitted hats hanging on the hooks in the garage because the birds have built nests in them.

--you don't close the garage door in the spring because the birds are nesting in the garage door closing mechanism.

--your car has bird droppings all over it every morning -- oh well!

... you rise at 3:00am, meet a friend for breakfast and then drive three hours to Bodega Bay go get on a fishing boat by 7:00am. You get sick four times on the way out to the ordell Banks. You see six Laysan Albatrosses, two Pomarine Jaegers, and scores of other great birds at close range when the deck hand begins cleaning the fish. However, this process makes you sick again. On the way back to Bodega Bay you get sick three more times. In the car on the way home you and your friend discuss what an outstandingly wonderful day it has been. --

...after a six inch snowfall, you won't shovel out the driveway, or the front steps, or the sidewalk, or the back steps, but you shovel off half the patio in your bathrobe and boots in subzero windchill to spread seed on the cleared space because your juncos are hungry...*Julie Stielstra*

-- when you explain to the immigration official that the Salton Sea is a booby trap. (True story with Guy McCaskie's English accent and Pierre Devillers' Belgian accent, Lee Jones and I stayed quiet in the back seat while the official politely asked us to pull over so he could check our papers.)

-- when on the day you meet your future spouse you invite her to the dump to count gulls on the Christmas Count and she accepts. (Well she was looking at the Skylark on Pt. Reyes when we were introduced by a friend -- and we did find the Glaucous Gull!)

-- when you move down the street you take your yard list with you and continue to add to it.--*Ron LeValley*

...When you stay at a B&B but don't stay long enough to eat the breakfast. -- *Joyce A. Hoffmann*

...you're schlepping through the swamp in search of waterfowl, the mosquitoes are biting like crazy and on the way out someone in the group says "Watch out for the poison ivy!"

Panhandle Bird Club

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





