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Otago Region Newsletter 11/2023

November 2023



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/birdsotago/>

Ornithological Snippets

In addition to the birds seen at Kaikorai Estuary, a **Great Crested Grebe** was at Papanui Inlet on 6 November. **Long-tailed Cuckoos** were reported from Papatowai on 26 & 30 October. Large numbers of **Bar-tailed Godwits** were at Warrington Spit, with 668 on 15 November, and at Cabbage Point, with 850 on 17; more unexpectedly there were 4 over the Taieri A & P Showgrounds on 29 October. A **Marsh Crake** with 3 young was seen at Glenorchy Lagoon on 19 November. A juvenile Antipodean Albatross at Nugget Point on 7 November was unexpected. Up to 4 **Little Black Shags** were at the Water of Leith from 15 November. A **Nankeen Night Heron** was seen and photographed at Waitati on 26 October, and a possible **Eastern Cattle Egret** was reported from Dunedin Airport on 20 November.

Please send any interesting reports to cluthaphotos@gmail.com

Richard Schofield

eBird News

There're just a few days left of the final spring season of Atlas fieldwork. A big thank you to those who've been filling in blank squares over the last couple of months – it's really appreciated. Any gaps that Canberra filled on now would be a bonus, as they're pretty much in remote areas. Check the Atlas Effort Map, and drop me a line if you have any queries.

Richard 027 281 8701 or cluthaphotos@gmail.com

BirdsNZ Otago Branch News

Wader Count

Volunteers wanted for wader count on **Sunday November 26th**. High tide (2.05M) at Dunedin is at 2.50pm. There is no reserve day.

All members are most welcome to participate.

Up until 16 November please contact Maree Johnstone at email: mareej@kinect.co.nz, or phone 027 6609446 to be assigned to a team.

From 17 November send all enquiries to Dawn Palmer at email: birds.otago@birdsNZ.org.nz



Special eBird Workshop/seminar: “eBird as a research tool for bird conservation”

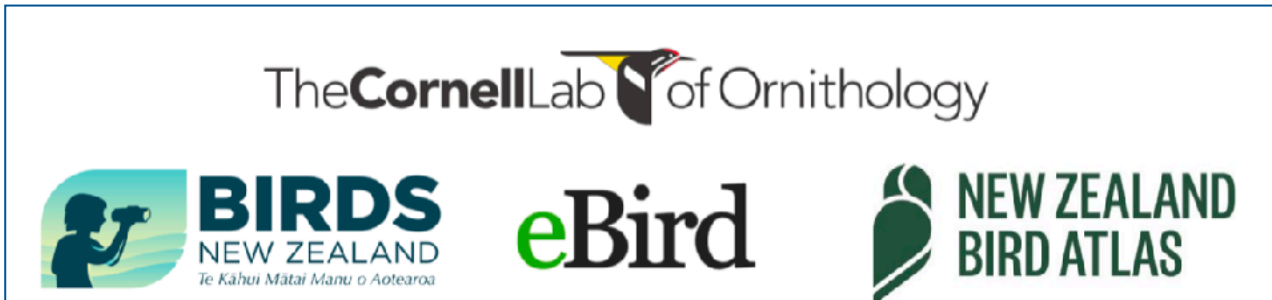
eBird is the premier, worldwide, curated database of bird species, locations and numbers. Data is entered by citizen scientists through to professional ornithologists. The database is freely available for researchers and other members of the public to use. It was developed by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and has been adopted by most professional ornithological bodies around the world, including Birds NZ.

A team from eBird, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, is visiting NZ in December and Birds NZ is sponsoring them to run a free workshops on how eBird can be used in research on bird abundance, distribution and movements, biodiversity, especially to inform conservation

planning. This is a unique opportunity for us to learn more about the value of eBird to bird conservation. Please put this event in your diary and plan to attend.

Dunedin event: Tuesday 12 December 4pm to 6pm in the Zoology Benham Seminar Room.

Queenstown event: Wednesday 13 December, 3pm to 6pm in Lake Hayes Pavilion.



Bittern monitoring update

The second round of recording was set up at Lake Tuakitoto, which was quite a marathon for Joy and Adrienne and Mary, changing SD cards and batteries as the recorders are spaced out over several kilometers around the lake. We did a few eBird checklists too as shining cuckoo and fernbird were heard. A black shag colony was in willows on an island in the middle of the southern part of the lake. The team at Te Nukuroa o Matamata has serviced 11 recorders at Waihola/Waipori.

So the next step, beginning next year will be analysing the thousands of sound files for bittern booms.



Joy and Adrienne concentrating on re-programming recorders



The team from Te Nukuroa o Matamata deploying recorders in the wetland

The Grief Bird

Bitterns feature in Nov/Dec NZ Geographic with photos by our own Craig McKenzie and written by Ellen Rykers who was an Otago member when she was studying Science Communications here at Otago University. Check it out at <https://www.nzgeo.com/stories/the-grief-bird/>

Enthusiastic participants at training session for counting birds in Town Belt

On Sunday 29 October about 15 people turned up to learn the 5 minute bird count method of monitoring birds. Everyone else was watching the All Blacks. Thanks to Birds NZ members that helped show new people how to use the birdcount.nz app. We visited several Bird Count sites and submitted counts. The participants were keen to learn more about the birds and impressed with the app. that also has a page that lists the birds you are likely to see and has a photo, short description and link to the bird call.



Some of the folk that gathered to count birds

Where are the Royal Spoonbill Colonies in Otago?

Birds NZ is planning a survey to locate colonies and count nests of royal spoonbill during the 2024/2025 breeding season to find out whether royal spoonbill are continuing to extend their breeding range within NZ.

Tasks this summer

This summer (December/January) Regions should be thinking about how to survey their areas for Royal spoonbill nesting colonies. This season we should undertake a general look-around to find out all the places where spoonbills are now nesting in our region, and if in hard-to-get-to locations thinking about strategies to try to count the number of active nests. Some areas may need boat access, or flying over, and is use of drones possible?



Pūteketeke / Southern Crested Grebe update



There's been plenty of action on Lake Wānaka and Lake Hāwea with our pūteketeke / grebe projects. The Lake Wānaka grebes started arriving at Grebe HQ near the marina in early September. Our team began putting out nesting platforms and saw some courtship behaviour and mating.

However, an extremely low lake level, the dredging of silt by huge diggers near the marina and a flood led to most grebes disappearing for a couple of weeks. They returned in early October and the first nest was eventually made on a platform, with the first egg laid on 12 October.

More grebes have been arriving daily, 15 nesting platforms are now installed, and that first egg hatched on the 4 November. The pair had two more chicks by 9 November and had left a few days later with all three chicks on board their backs. Eight nesting pairs are now active at the colony with more chicks expected in a couple of weeks. For the first time, a pair of Australian coots hijacked a platform and built a nest of their own. They had six eggs by 6 November and have now departed with their chicks. If you're in Wānaka over the summer, head to the lakefront boardwalk for a bird's eye view of the grebe proceedings!



The Lake Hāwea grebes have two nesting platforms near the township and one in Silver Bay up the lake. Only one pair has nested so far – their first tiny chick appeared on 16 November. Other grebes are lurking about and the second platform has been moved further west to reduce aggression between pairs.

In mid-October, we heard that a grebe pair was trying in vain to build a nest on Lake Wakatipu at Kinloch. We sent our volunteer expert Markus to Kinloch with a spare nesting platform which was installed on a Sunday. The grebes jumped on board the next day and had laid an egg by Tuesday! We're amazed at their lack of neophobia around these platforms and how well the structures stand up to wind, water and the wake of boats.

An unexpected event this month was when a famous talk show host in the US – John Oliver – launched an “alarmingly aggressive” campaign which saw the pūteketeke rise from oblivion to NZ’s Bird of the Century in just a week! The controversial campaign caused staff at Forest & Bird’s national office to lose many nights of sleep trying to keep their voting website afloat, amidst a record 350,000+ votes flooding in from 195 countries. We received a lot of media interest as soon as results were out. After doing numerous interviews with TV, radio and print reporters, we’re receiving loads more traffic on our Facebook page. We are very happy with the results and still slightly in shock about it all. At least the Bird of the Century is a species that is gradually increasing in numbers, thanks to the efforts of many volunteers around the South Island.



A team of postgraduate Science Communication students from Otago University have recently made and released a wonderful short documentary about John Darby and the Lake Wānaka grebe project. To view via Vimeo, [click this link](#).

Beautiful T-shirts featuring our new logo are now available for a limited time – click this link to order yours before 10 December: <https://www.theprintroom.nz/collections/grebe-project>

We've just received a WWF-NZ grant so we'll hopefully get some new signage and a website made in the coming months. Exciting times!



Can you help? There is a full population census of grebes taking place on 27th January 2024, following on from similar surveys in 2004 and 2014. If you'd like to help with grebe counts, please contact: Petrina Duncan for Lake Wānaka and Hāwea, Dawn Palmer for the Wakatipu basin, and Rosalie Snoyink for other areas such as Canterbury lakes.

Petrina: petrina.duncan@southernlakessanctuary.org.nz

Dawn: dawn.palmer@xtra.co.nz

Rosalie: rsnoyink@xtra.co.nz

Keep an eye on our Facebook page, [The Lake Wanaka Grebes](#), for updates and other stories about our project.

Petrina Duncan

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You can join Birds New Zealand right now for just \$1.50 a week.
It costs \$80 a year, and for students it's just \$40 a year:
www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/join-now/

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Programme 2023

Monthly Indoor Meetings will be held on the 4th Tuesday at 7.30pm in the Valley Project Community Rooms, 262 North Road, NEV. Just past the primary school, with a parking area in front. Look for the NZ Falcon Mural.

We will try to zoom the talks live for those unable to attend. We welcome our members from Central Otago area and others who can't get to Dunedin, and members not so comfortable with attending meetings at this time. You can join the meetings by Zoom link.

A new Zoom link for meetings

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83476387704?pwd=Vy9Fd2VEZk4zSnF6Z05pVnljZjBhdz0>

The meeting passcode is: 523492

November	Sunday 26	Wader count. Enquiries to Dawn Palmer at email: birds.otago@birdsnz.org.nz
November	Tuesday 28	Abby Smith will compère the annual Quiz Night
December	Tuesday 12	Ian Davies and Tom Auer, Cornell Lab of Ornithology eBird as a research tool for bird conservation Benham Seminar Room, Department of Zoology, 340 Great King Street, Dunedin
December	Wednesday 13	Ian Davies and Tom Auer, Cornell Lab of Ornithology eBird as a research tool for bird conservation Lake Hayes Pavilion. 710 Lake Hayes-Arrow Junction Highway.

Programme 2024

Birds NZ Otago meetings will return to the **Benham Seminar Room,
Department of Zoology, 340 Great King Street, Dunedin**

January	Saturday 27	National Pūteketeke/Crested Grebe Census (contact details in article)
February	Tuesday 27	Katie Gray Black-fronted tern and banded dotterel tracking
March	Tuesday 26	Vanessa Barry Buller's albatross genetics
April	Tuesday 23	Quinn Berentson The legendary moa
May	Tuesday 28	Bradley Shields Landscape scale predator control for birds

Regular Field trips are held, usually on first Saturdays or Sundays. Check for details within the newsletters. We carpool for these trips and share expenses.

Suggestions for locations for field trips and atlassing trips, and offers to help lead trips would really be appreciated, please contact Dawn birds.otago@birdsnz.org.nz

Contributions for the next newsletter should reach the editor by **23 January** sodlin@gmail.com

Disclaimer

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