

BIRDS OF THE NELSON/TASMAN REGION

AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

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The Ornithological Society of New Zealand

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by David Butler, Peter Gaze and Jenny Hawkins

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by Peter Field
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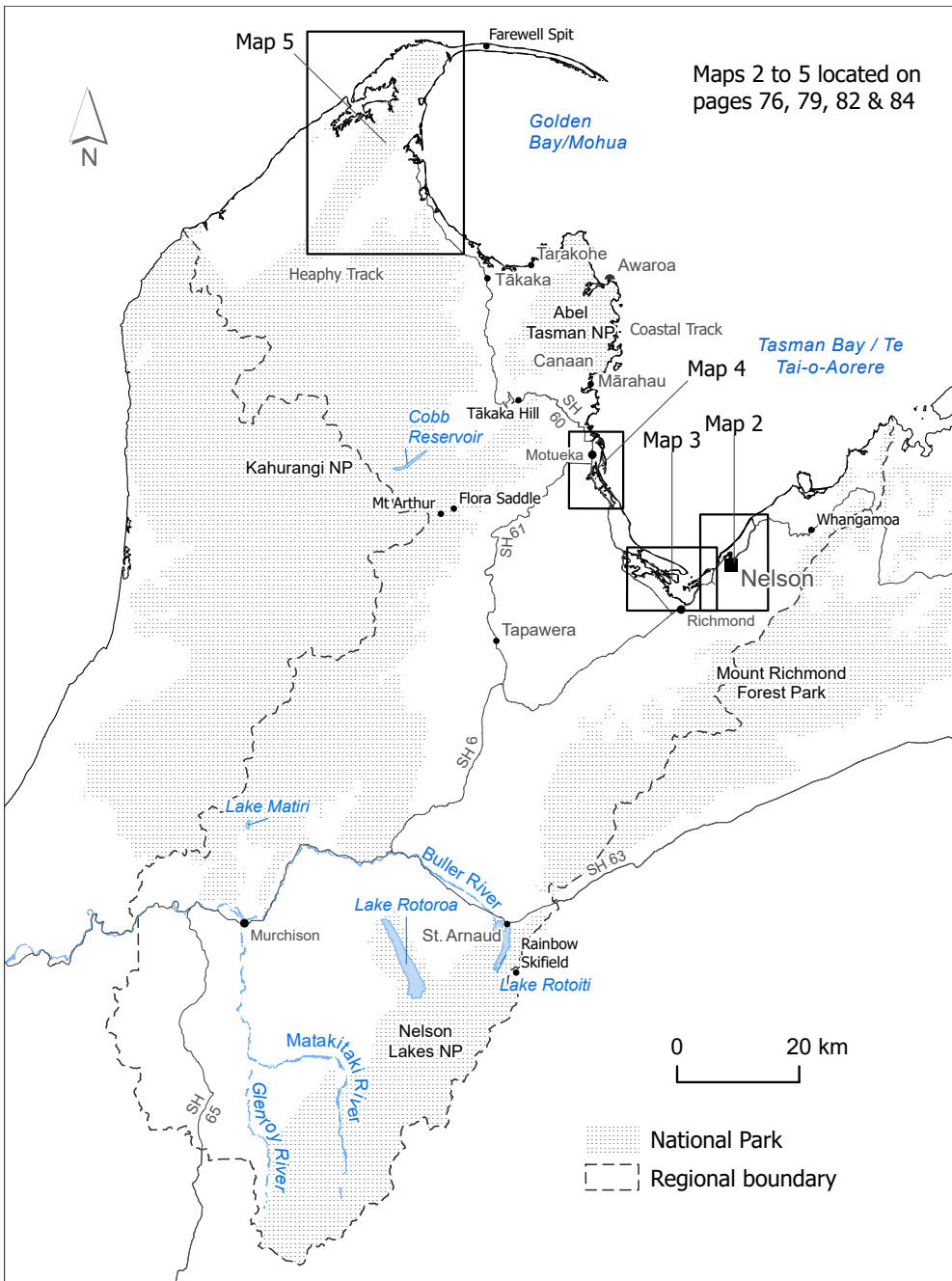
COVER: ORANGE-FRONTED PARAKEET - KĀKĀRIKI KARAKA *Cyanoramphus malherbi*
The Brook Waimārama Sanctuary, Nelson currently supports about one third of the world population of this critically endangered endemic species. PHOTO Bradley Shields

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Map 1: Birdwatching sites in the Nelson/Tasman Region



SONG THRUSH - MANU-KAI-HUA-RAKAU A sound of the suburbs is the pip-pip-pip of a youngster as it impatiently awaits the return of its harassed parent with yet another beak full of food for it. PHOTO Willie Cook

INTRODUCTION

This book is an update of *Birds of the Nelson Region and where to find them* by David Butler, Peter Gaze and Jenny Hawkins, published in 1990 (and hereafter referred to as the 1990 edition). As with the original, it is intended as a guide to show where birds of the Nelson/Tasman region can most easily be seen. It includes information on their habits, but does not show how to identify them (there are plenty of resources for this both on- and offline). It includes some species that were not present in the region in 1990, and for some other species it notes how their numbers have fared since then. One notable feature is how numbers of all Arctic-breeding shorebirds have declined over the past few decades – reflecting flyway-wide declines of many species, thought to be due, in large part, to loss of migratory staging habitats around the Yellow Sea in Asia.

The region is a marvellous place to enjoy birds, with a wide variety of habitats from open ocean, sheltered bays and estuaries, through farmland, low scrub and regenerating bush, to pine and beech forests, to alpine and high mountains over 2,000 metres. The region's estuaries are of national significance to birdlife, and Farewell Spit is a "Wetland of International Importance" designated under the international Ramsar Convention. The species seen is dependent on the state of the tide, with spring tides generally best for high-tide roost, and incoming and outgoing tides best to see birds feeding. The forests of the interior contain small populations of some of the country's rarer birds, but they aren't always willing to show themselves. The best time to visit is generally in spring

and early summer when most species are singing – in winter there is some movement to lower altitudes. It must be borne in mind that birds are not always completely faithful to roosting, feeding and breeding sites, or to any other activity ascribed to them. Therefore, don't be surprised if they aren't doing what this book says they should be. Part of the fascination of birdwatching lies in its unpredictability, the ever-present possibility of finding the unexpected. The search for birds can also take you into some of the finest scenery the region has to offer.

The producers of this book acknowledge the legacy of P  rri  ne Moncrieff who first championed the case for birdlife and their habitats in this region. She was a founder member of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (OSNZ) and a stalwart of the Forest and Bird Society. She worked tirelessly for our native birds and their habitat protection, very generously donating many thousand hectares to the Crown for permanent protection. It is a privilege to continue with the work she began.

Since 1990 there has been an ever-increasing awareness of the plight of many of the native birds in the region. This has seen the establishment of mainly volunteer-based conservation groups involved in predator control and species reintroductions. The Department of Conservation (DOC) has a webpage with the main Nelson/Tasman conservation groups: <https://www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/volunteer/groups/nelson-tasman/>

A wide range of sources has been used in the compilation of this publication - too many to list here. In addition to observations by many of the region's birdwatchers, the main ones include:

OSNZ/Birds New Zealand/ Te K  hui M  tai Manu o Aotearoa

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/> – including Rare birds archive; Classified Summarised Notes (to 2004); Vagrant and extra-limital bird records; wader censuses

New Zealand Birds Online <https://www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz/>

eBird <https://www.eBird.org>

Heather, B. D. & Robertson, H. A., *The field guide to the birds of New Zealand* (2015) and *The hand guide to the birds of New Zealand* (2015).
Scofield, P. & Stephenson, B., *Birds of New Zealand; a photographic guide* (2013).



BROWN CREEPER - PĪPIPI Usually encountered in flocks, it is one of the least known birds of the South Island bush, and one well worth the finding. PHOTO Bradley Shields

SPECIES LIST

This list follows the order of species in the Ornithological Society of New Zealand's 2022 *Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand*. This can be found at <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/society-publications/checklist/>.

In addition to native New Zealand species, it also includes species that do not occur naturally in this country, most of which were introduced here in the late 1800s, and are shown by the word 'Introduced' following the species name.

Great Spotted Kiwi ~ Roroa

Apteryx maxima

Great Spotted Kiwi is found in three discrete natural populations in northwest Nelson, the Paparoa Range and Arthur's Pass. They are still relatively abundant in northwest Nelson where they frequent the subalpine zone (700-1,100 metres) across a wide variety of habitats. They have been reintroduced to Nelson Lakes National Park and the Flora Stream catchment area in Kahurangi National Park. They are best heard or seen while on the Heaphy Track, particularly on the Goulard Downs.

Black Swan ~ Kakiānau

Cygnus atratus

Farewell Spit is the most significant moulting site for Black Swans in the country with about 15% of the national population present between November and March attracted by the largest eelgrass (*Zostera mulleri*)

beds in the country. After completing moult these birds disperse back to the West Coast of the South Island, Wairau Lagoons and Wairarapa. They make an impressive sight along the Pakawau coast and the base of the Spit. They are found in small numbers along the rest of the region's coastline and at Nelson Lakes, breeding at various sites including Farewell Spit, Bell Island and Nelson Wastewater Treatment Plants, where nesting and young have been recorded in each month from May through to February.

Greylag Goose ~ Kuihi (Introduced)

Anser anser

Small numbers of these large feral geese are found scattered about the region, generally in grassed areas with associated ponds and dams. Flocks of domesticated birds are not uncommon in these same settings and it is not always easy to differentiate between these and truly feral birds.

Canada Goose ~ Kuihi (Introduced)

Branta canadensis

Found mainly in coastal areas from Farewell Spit to Nelson Haven, in a variety of generally open habitats, usually associated with water, including estuaries, grassed paddocks and sewage works. In this coastal zone, the largest numbers appear to congregate at Triangle Flat, at the base of Farewell Spit.

A flock of 880 on Lake Matiri in December 2022 would seem to compensate somewhat for the relative paucity of inland sightings in the region.

The 1990 edition reported that this species was rarely seen in the region with small groups occasionally recorded in river valleys in Nelson Lakes National Park, and solitary birds visiting the coast. Since then, there has been a marked increase in abundance and range, apparently in part due to deliberate introductions such as in Golden Bay.

Paradise Shelduck ~ Pūtangitangi

Tadorna variegata

The Paradise Shelduck can be seen on farmland throughout the region and in river valleys and on lakes right up into the mountains. It can also be seen – and heard – in urban parks and reserves. During the moult large flocks of several hundred birds may gather on lakes inland, and at estuaries and sewage ponds on the coast. It is partial to re-grassed pastureland and has a particular fondness for chicory. There has been a recent decrease in the Murchison area, possibly due to changing land use, though the population has shown a healthy increase in the region as a whole.

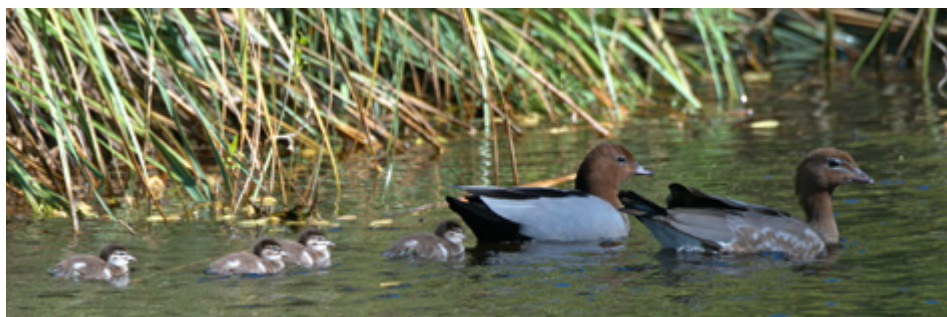
Australian Wood Duck

Chenonetta jubata

These exquisite small ducks – the female in particular would not look out of place on an Egyptian tomb painting – are recent arrivals in the region. There had been two records of the species, a female at the Nelson marina in 1999, and a male at the Nelson Wastewater Treatment Plant in 2010. However, in December 2014, 4 (3 males and 1 female or, possibly, a juvenile) were seen on a private pond at Maisey Road, Redwood Valley. In October 2015, a pair was seen with 4 ducklings at the pond by The Playhouse, Westdale Road. Another pair were seen in November at a nearby site in Stringer Road. Since then, this species has bred annually. In winter, when the ducks tend to flock, up to 25 birds have been recorded.

The most reliable sites are The Playhouse pond, Westdale Road (private land but public access with care), and the pond at Hoddy Estuary Park, Redwood Valley.

This is a new breeding bird, not just for the region but New Zealand as a whole. They have not travelled far from the original sites, but it is difficult to estimate their current numbers due to the number of private ponds in the area. If it does continue to prosper, it would make a worthy replacement for the closely related, but extinct, Finsch's Duck (*Chenonetta finschi*).



AUSTRALIAN WOOD DUCK The first proven record of this species breeding in New Zealand was at Westdale Road, Redwood Valley in October 2015. PHOTO Willie Cook

Blue Duck ~ Whio

Hymenolaimus malacorhynchos

Blue Duck are birds of swift, upland rivers though single birds have been known to turn up in the most unexpected places, such as Queen's Gardens, and the Brook and Maitai Rivers close to Nelson, as well as at the Riuwaka Resurgence. They are very vulnerable to predation, particularly by stoats, and their numbers have suffered accordingly. Stoat control, plus translocation programmes, have been implemented since the mid-2000s with birds reintroduced to the Flora Stream catchment, the Wangapeka and Fyfe Rivers and in the Abel Tasman National Park. The Flora catchment is probably the best place to see these often elusive ducks.

It was uncertain if it was holding its own in 1990, with some solitary birds in Nelson Lakes observed attempting to mate with Paradise Shelduck. There is evidence of continued decline since 1990, but this has been reversed in some areas with the stoat control and translocation programmes leading to increased breeding success and survival. A September 2023 update from an ongoing census in Kahurangi National Park reported a 340% increase in Blue Duck numbers since 2000, with 846 adults counted, including 335 breeding pairs.

Grey Teal ~ Tētē-moroiti

Anas gracilis

Typically a bird of freshwater lakes and ponds, these dabbling ducks also can be seen on estuarine channels and associated mudflats. They are mainly a coastal bird in the region. Flocks of over 100 have been recorded on the tidal flats at Farewell Spit. However, they appear at their most abundant at the two main sewage works in the region, at Bell Island and Wakapuaka.

Prior to 1990 it was sparsely recorded in the region with a stronghold of up to 50 birds at Bell Island Wastewater Treatment Plant. Numbers have since increased, as has its range. At the Nelson Wastewater Treatment Plant, counts of over 200 are not unusual in summer/autumn months, with a high of 490 (February 2019).

Mallard ~ Rakiraki (Introduced)

Anas platyrhynchos

The most common waterbird in the region and the most noticeable, being the duck species most habituated to humans. They are the 'Do not feed the ducks' ducks, being found in a range of habitats, usually associated with water, in such disparate settings as the Queen's Gardens, Lake Rotoiti, Te Waikoropupū Springs and Collingwood Estuary. They congregate in the greatest numbers at the oxidation ponds at Bell Island Wastewater Treatment Plant and the Nelson Wastewater Treatment Plant and associated wetlands. Because of hybridisation with Grey Ducks, they can show a bewildering range of plumage.

Grey Duck ~ Pārera

Anas superciliosa

Because of widespread hybridisation with Mallards, pure Grey Ducks probably no longer exist in the region, although some birds showing good characters of Grey Duck can still be found in less disturbed watercourses remote from human activity – and from Mallards. However,



MALE MALLARD - RAKIRAKI with hybrid Grey Duck/Mallards. PHOTO Willie Cook

birds which appear to bear nearly every characteristic of a Grey Duck are not uncommonly found in small numbers in more accessible areas, particularly amongst Mallard flocks. These beg the question, 'What qualifies as a grey duck?' - the answer to which appears to occupy a suitably grey area.

Australasian Shoveler ~ Kuruwhengi

Spatula rhynchotis

Australasian Shoveler share much the same habitats and range as does the Grey Teal. They can be found on a variety of freshwater sites, as well as estuaries – a total of 780 was seen loafing on Nelson Haven in May 2018. Motueka Estuary, off Wharf Road, is a good spot to see them.

As with the equally dispersive Grey Teal, Australasian Shoveler were uncommon in the region at the time of the 1990 edition. Like the teal, they were most numerous at the Bell Island Wastewater Treatment Plant and the Nelson Wastewater Treatment Plant oxidation pond, with up to 50 birds seen at the former. This is still the case, but with greatly increased

numbers – a count of over 500 birds is not unusual at Nelson Wastewater Treatment Plant.

New Zealand Scaup ~ Pāpango

Aythya novaeseelandiae

The smallest of our ducks, Scaup can be found on lakes and ponds, and has experienced a dramatic increase in numbers in the region in the last decade or so, the reasons for which are not understood. Counts of over 1,000 have been recorded at the Nelson Wastewater Treatment Plant, making it a Wetland of International Importance as it supports over 1% of the global population. There is restricted access to the site (since May 2023), though good numbers of Scaup can still be seen on the oxidation ponds from the adjacent public road. The Easton Loop pond off the Moutere Inlet stretch of the coastal highway (SH60) is another reliable place to see them, as is the Saxton Creek pond on Saxton Field, Stoke.

Prior to 1990 Scaup were mainly confined to sites in Golden Bay and Nelson Lakes. Since then, there has been a huge increase in numbers of this species, with them spreading widely through the region – small numbers now regularly occur on the Murchison oxidation ponds. Any enclosed body of freshwater is worth checking out for at least a pair or two.



NEW ZEALAND SCAUP - PĀPANGO Locally, in populations where counts have differentiated the sexes, males have generally markedly outnumbered females. PHOTO Craig Martin

California Quail ~ Tikaokao (Introduced)

Callipepla californica

California Quail was introduced into New Zealand as a gamebird from western USA between 1862 and 1880, and was first released in the region in June 1866 at the mouth of the Maitai Valley. It prefers drier areas with some scrubby cover, including parks and rural gardens, and populations seem to fluctuate markedly from season to season. It can be more often heard than seen, with the male's insistent 3-note call one of the sounds of summer.

Common Pheasant (Introduced)

Phasianus colchicus

Pheasants were introduced to the country many times from 1842 onwards, the first release in the region being at Lower Moutere in 1851. Never too far from cover, they can be seen on a variety of habitats including farmland, forestry, coastal scrub and roadside verges. This is another species where the very distinctive male is probably more often heard than seen.

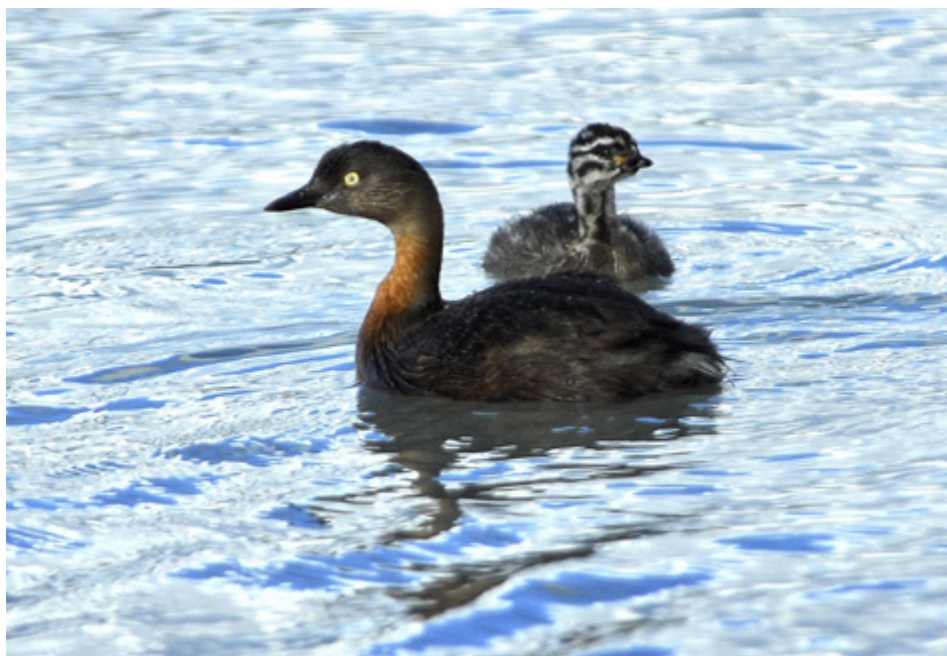
They are most likely to be encountered on Rough and Rabbit Islands.

New Zealand Dabchick ~ Weweia

Poliocephalus rufopectus

Found principally on small bodies of freshwater, the New Zealand Dabchick had been extinct in the South Island as a breeding bird since 1941. In 2012 a pair with 2 young were seen on Lake Killarney, Takaka, and there has been breeding at this site since. In December 2022 a second breeding site in the region was recorded, a pair with two young seen on a private pond in Hope. They have been annual autumn/winter visitors to the Nelson Wastewater Treatment Plant since 2010, with a highest count of six, and have been reported from a handful of other sites.

It is well worth checking out your nearest pond(s) for these delightful birds either for overwintering birds, or for another breeding pair.



NEW ZEALAND DABCHICK - WEVEIA returned as breeding birds in the South Island after an absence of seventy years with birds nesting on Lake Killarney, Takaka. PHOTO Steve Wood

Australasian Little Grebe ~ Tokitokipio

Tachybaptus novaehollandiae

A self-introduced bird from Australia, first recorded in New Zealand near Arrowtown, Otago in April 1968, it was first observed in the region on Druggans Dam, in the Aorere Goldfields, Golden Bay, in May 1975. Recorded regularly at Dune Lake, Wharariki, from June 1994, through to 2008, with a pair nesting there in 2002. A single bird was seen on Lake Killarney, Takaka in June 2018, and a single male in breeding plumage at Kelling Road pond, Upper Moutere from October 2021 to February 2022 and presumably the same bird from October 2022 to (at least) February 2024. A (separate) bird in non-breeding plumage was seen in March 2023 at Nelson Wastewater Treatment Plant wetlands.

Rock Pigeon ~ Kererū Aropari (Introduced)

Columba livia

There is no definite record of when this species was first introduced into the region, though it was most likely in the 1850s. It is found in a variety of urban and rural settings, most often in small flocks. Particularly in urban areas, care has to be taken sometimes in differentiating between truly feral and domesticated flocks.

New Zealand Pigeon ~ Kererū

Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae

The New Zealand Pigeon is a large, conspicuous endemic bird found throughout the region. It prefers forest habitat below 500 metres altitude which includes its favoured fruit-bearing trees, though it has been recorded nesting above 1,100 m. It is classified as a keystone species being the sole disperser of large fruit critical to maintaining lowland forests. The fruit supply in the forest begins in November with titoki, wineberry and fuchsia; more species such as rimu, mataī and tawa ripen during the main breeding season from December to February, and miro provides an important food source well into winter. During late winter and spring birds are forced to feed on foliage – for example, at Lake Rotorua they are most common between June and September when kowhai leaves are their major food item. They also feed on exotic foliage such as willow, poplar, orchard species, tree lucerne and broom. At this time of the year, they are at their most visible and flocks of over 70 can be seen well away from their usual forest haunts with a few then visiting suburban gardens.

Shining Cuckoo ~ Pīpīwharau

Chrysococcyx lucidus

Shining Cuckoos are fairly common and widespread from September to February, when they have migrated from the Bismarck Archipelago, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands to New Zealand to breed. The song of the first arrivals is eagerly awaited and can be heard in suburban

gardens, farmland, forest and scrub (but beware cheap imitations from Starlings and Song Thrushes!). It is this distinctive and persistent song that draws attention to the bird, though finding the source of the song is not that easy, with the birds being ventriloquial.

On the rare occasions it is seen, its striking iridescence and beautifully patterned plumage cannot but impress. Sadly, for most people, this opportunity usually only occurs when they have found one dead or dazed after hitting a window, this species being particularly prone to window strike.

Like most cuckoo species it is a brood parasite, leaving other birds to rear its young, usually laying its eggs in the nests of Grey Warbler.

Shining Cuckoo feeds predominantly on insects and is one of the few New Zealand bird species able to eat toxic insects such as the caterpillars of Monarch and Red Admiral butterflies.

Long-tailed Cuckoo ~ Koekoeā

Eudynamys taitensis

Wintering in a 11,000 km arc of the Pacific between Micronesia and Henderson Island, the Long-tailed Cuckoo breeds only in New Zealand. Its loud, harsh squawks, repeated from high up in the forest canopy, are often heard around dusk and during the night. Another brood parasite, in the Nelson/Tasman region it lays its eggs in the nests of Brown Creeper. It is restricted to the larger tracts of native forests and exotic plantations and, like its host, is often found in higher altitude forests, as in Nelson Lakes and Kahurangi National Parks. Birds can be occasionally seen in transit to or from their breeding area, and if in flight, can at first be mistaken for an overly long-tailed New Zealand Falcon.

Banded Rail ~ Moho Pererū

Gallirallus philippensis

In the South Island, the Banded Rail is found only in the Nelson and Marlborough regions. The 2011-12 Banded Rail survey concluded that it was widespread but in generally low numbers throughout most of the

region's wetlands and coastal estuaries. A community group is planting and trapping around the Waimea Inlet with the express aim of providing better habitat for this species. Usually a secretive bird, in the region it is restricted to large saltmarshes with stands of sea rush and mixed stands of jointed rush and marsh ribbonwood with a regular supply of freshwater where the small snail *Potamopyrgus estuarinus*, a favoured food, is present. Certain sites on the fringes of Waimea Estuary, Moutere Inlet, Golden Bay estuaries and Whanganui Inlet hold resident birds, usually only one or two pairs each.

The best place to see Banded Rail is from the causeway at Marahau at the start of the Abel Tasman National Park track.

It is thought that there has been a decline from the estimated 85 pairs recorded breeding in the district in 1980-82. Reasons for this possible decline may include predation and continuing loss of coastal wetlands.

Weka

Gallirallus australis

Ever curious and confiding, the Weka is found in a range of habitats in the region, from sea level to above the treeline. Being flightless, they favour areas where there is cover for them to scuttle into if they sense danger. They are susceptible to population boom and busts, with them currently experiencing a boom period after disappearing, except for a few small isolated populations, from the region for 15 or so years.

Amongst the places to see them are along the Heaphy Track, the causeway at Marahau at the start of the Abel Tasman National Park track, the Flora catchment in Kahurangi National Park and the Abel Tasman National Park coastal track. They generally shy away from urban areas, though this hasn't stopped them from turning up in the middle of Nelson.

Weka usually do well in Golden Bay where an absence of rabbits means an absence of their worst predator – the ferret. In Tasman Bay there has been a remarkable resurgence over the last 15 years with Weka present and breeding throughout most of suburbia. This phenomenon has not been explained, nor has the more recent decline.

In 2006 Weka were re-introduced to Abel Tasman National Park where they had declined to virtually nil. The species is now very common again in the park, which may or may not be related to the introduction as it happened concurrently with the boom in Tasman Bay.

Marsh Crake ~ Kotoreke

Zapornia pusilla

The Marsh Crake has been recorded at fewer sites in the region than Banded Rail, though this may relate to its more cryptic nature, for crake will occupy inland wetlands and smaller coastal ones not suitable for rails. Its favoured habitat is raupō and purei swamps and also saltmarshes. Birds have been recorded at Whanganui Inlet, Mangarakau Swamp, the causeway at Marahau at the start of the Abel Tasman National Park track and other coastal marshes in the park, Pearl Creek (Appleby), Riuwaka, Staples Street (Motueka) and the Nelson Wastewater Treatment Plant wetlands.



MARSH CRAKE - KOTOREKE One of the more difficult birds of the region to see, the usual sighting is of one disappearing back into the vegetation. PHOTO Craig Martin

Given the right habitat they can quickly (re)colonise an area – for example up to 6 were seen in the newly formed Nelson Wastewater Treatment Plant wetlands in 2013. Marsh Crakes respond well to playback calls, and this has perhaps led to an apparent increase in records in recent years.

Pukeko ~ Pūkeko

Porphyrio melanotus

Pukeko, with their distinctive white under-tail feathers and red bill, are widespread in swamps, wet pastures and fringes of estuaries. They seem to be a key indicator species of pastureland which was formerly wetlands. The paddocks beside Glen Road, Nelson North and beside lower Queen Street, Richmond and the road to Rough Island are prime examples of how they can build up into prodigious numbers in such habitat, as are the paddocks beside Thorp Street and Staples Street, Motueka.

Australian Coot

Fulica atra

The Australasian Coot, with its distinctive 'rowing-boat' swimming action, is an uncommon sight in the region. Not included in the 1990 edition – though there is a record for the species at Whanganui Inlet in 1985 - the first records appear to be of breeding birds on Island Lake, Wharariki, in September 2001 (breeding continuing until at least 2004). 1-2 birds were seen monthly on the pond at Founder's Park, Nelson between August 2002 and May 2004, but with no sign of breeding. In more recent years, there have been sightings of 1-6 birds mainly on ponds between Moutere Inlet and the Nelson Wastewater Treatment Plant. Two adults were seen feeding a youngster on the Hoddy Estuary Park pond in December 2020 and likewise on Kelling Road pond, Upper Moutere, January, 2022.

This is one to look out for on vegetation-fringed ponds and small lakes as it has the potential to spread across the region as New Zealand Scaup have done (but perhaps not in the same sort of numbers).

Variable Oystercatcher ~ Tōrea Pango

Haematopus unicolor

In the Nelson/Tasman region the Variable Oystercatcher (VOC) is not particularly well named being almost entirely found in its black phase with only the occasional pied and 'smudgy' form. They are found right around the coastline, usually as pairs occupying their breeding territory all year. They nest in sandy, pebbly and rocky areas, always near the highwater mark. Nelson's Boulder Bank holds many breeding pairs along its length. In autumn/winter flocks of what can be 100 and more gather at high tide roosts and to feed in coastal wet paddocks. Tasman Bay holds the largest population of Variable Oystercatchers in New Zealand, and hence on the planet, and Bell Island shellbank the highest count for a single site with 482 in October 1999, at least 10% of the then total population. Tasman Bay appears to act as a 'nursery' for juvenile/immature birds with young from as far away as Kaikoura being recorded.

The most accessible high tide roosts are those at Nelson Haven, Motueka Sandspit and Pūponga Farm Park. The playing fields of Neale Park in Nelson can host over 100 feeding Variable Oystercatchers alongside lesser numbers of South Island Pied Oystercatcher during and after wet weather.

Locally, since 1990, the population trend seems to have echoed the national one of a steady increase in numbers, with perhaps a levelling off in recent years. The 1990 edition noted up to 15 pairs nesting on the Boulder Bank – recent surveys have recorded about 90 pairs.

South Island Pied Oystercatcher ~ Tōrea

Haematopus finschi

This black-and-white oystercatcher with its heavy orange bill is one of the most conspicuous birds of our estuaries. About 14,000 South Island Pied Oystercatchers (SIPO) spend the winter around the coast of the Nelson/Tasman region, the largest number being at Farewell Spit. After breeding, birds use the top of the South Island as a staging post to moult before they

head to their wintering quarters in the North Island. As a result, numbers in the late summer can be twice those of wintering birds.

Non-breeding birds tend to remain here for summer. Some breeders move inland to the upper parts of the Tasman district, particularly the Buller and Matakītaki, but the majority leave the region altogether for nesting areas further south. In estuaries the birds feed mainly on bivalves, particularly cockles, but after heavy rain many move from the mudflats to take earthworms and grubs from nearby paddocks and playing fields. Flocks of birds, whether feeding or roosting, can be seen at sites around most of the coast, including Nelson Haven, Motueka Sandspit, Abel Tasman National Park, Golden Bay coast and Pūponga Farm Park.

The 1990 edition stated that up to 17,000 SIPO were to be found during the winter around the region's coastline. This was still true between 2008 and 2010 but declined to about 14,000 between 2012 and 2021.

Pied Stilt ~ Poaka

Himantopus himantopus

Another black-and-white wader, with its thin bill and long delicate pink legs, it is a far daintier looking bird than the robust oystercatcher. It is, however, not lacking in pugnaciousness – both physical and vocal. It is found along the coastline, particularly in estuaries, and in wet pastures. A few nest in the region both on or near the coast and inland close to water, but their numbers increase in autumn as birds arrive from breeding areas elsewhere. If given the right conditions, they are quick to find new nesting opportunities as they did when they formed a colony of 19 nests during the construction of the Nelson Wastewater Treatment Plant wetlands, prior to its full inundation.

This is another wader that is more common in Tasman Bay than Golden Bay, with small numbers dotted about the coast, their largest numbers are at Nelson Haven with regular counts over 150 and where a recent count (June 2023) of 240 represented 1% of the national population. Depending on tide levels, Moutere Inlet and Motueka Sandspit are also good places to see this species.



PIED STILT - POAKA Nelson Haven has been known to host 1% of the country's population of this elegant wader. PHOTO Rebecca Bowater

Pacific Golden Plover ~ Kuriri

Pluvialis fulva

A rare summer visitor from the northern hemisphere where they breed on the Arctic tundra in coastal Siberia and Alaska. There has been a marked decline in numbers – formerly an annual visitor to Farewell Spit and Rough Island, Waimea Inlet (up to a dozen birds), but now only very occasionally recorded, usually singletons.

Southern New Zealand Dotterel ~ Tūturiwhatu

Charadrius obscurus obscurus

Considered a breeding bird in the region until the mid to late 1800s. In more recent times it has been a rare visitor, mainly in winter, from its relict breeding grounds on Stewart Island/Rakiura, as evidenced by the occurrence of colour-banded birds. It is occasionally encountered singly on Farewell Spit and Motueka Sandspit, with sightings too at Waimea Inlet (Bell Island shellbank, Rabbit Island and Rough Island) and Nelson Haven.

Never seen in other than single figures (highest count of 8 on Farewell Spit in March 1974), there has been a gradual decline in both sightings and numbers of this species in the region since 1990.

Formerly unrecorded in the South Island, the North Island sub-species, *Charadrius obscurus aquilonius*, now breeds as far south as Wellington and has, since 2016, been recorded three times in the South Island, with a bird on Motueka Sandspit in October 2023 the first for the region.

Banded Dotterel ~ Pohowera

Charadrius bicinctus

Banded Dotterel is present in all our estuaries and can also be seen in paddocks after wet weather. Comparatively few birds nest in the region but a large number arrive in autumn from other breeding grounds to spend the winter here. Farewell Spit, Motueka Sandspit and Westhaven Inlet are the key wintering sites, with Farewell Spit generally having the largest concentration, some of which can be seen at Pūponga Farm Park. There is also a very mobile flock of anywhere between 20 and 150 birds which can be seen at the top of Nelson Haven on an outgoing tide.

Small numbers breed on Farewell Spit and Motueka Sandspit, as well as other scattered sites including on inland braided rivers. The stretch of the Boulder Bank directly south of the top end of Boulder Bank Drive was a very accessible place to see them during the breeding season – too accessible, it would appear, as human disturbance seems to have pushed them from continuing to nest there.

Wrybill ~ Ngutu Pare

Anarhynchus frontalis

Wrybills pass through the region on migration between their southern breeding grounds on braided river beds and their North Island overwintering areas. Most records are from Motueka Sandspit and Waimea Inlet, with occasional sightings on Farewell Spit. Bell Island shellbank hosts the largest numbers with over 50 not unusual and a record of 182 in August 2004.

Black-fronted Dotterel

Elseyornis melanops

Never much more than a rare visitor, they are found in small numbers, usually by rivers or in short grass. As far as is known, they have not bred in the region. Sightings continue along the Waimea River, upstream and downstream from the Appleby bridge. It was formerly found at the top of Nelson Haven when there were small ephemeral ponds adjacent to the Nelson Wastewater Treatment Plant. In 2009 these were superseded by the wetlands, and the last records for this site were of 2 birds from June to October 2010. A pair were apparently resident on what was then the Ready Lawn site at Appleby for some time during the 2000s.

Spur-winged Plover

Vanellus miles

Once heard, the loud whirring rattle call of the Spur-winged Plover is not easily forgotten. Self-introduced from Australia, they were first seen in the region in December 1971 at Lake Rotoiti. Successfully breeding the next year at Bainham, Golden Bay, they have since become well established and widespread in the region. Most birds are seen as pairs or small groups in paddocks, playing fields, estuaries and other open habitats, though flocks of up to 50 are not unusual in late summer/autumn. Nesting as early as June, even in the frosts, they are vigorous defenders of their nests, this being particularly evident when they are seen and heard mobbing an overly inquisitive Swamp Harrier.

Since the 1990 edition they have expanded their range in the region, almost to saturation point, with a concurrent increase in numbers.

Far Eastern Curlew

Numenius madagascariensis

Sightings of this magnificent large wader, with its long decurved bill, have been generally confined in the region to Farewell Spit. Away from the Spit, there have been sightings of single birds at Nelson Haven, Delaware Bay

and Waimea Inlet. From its heyday in the 1960s, with 37 seen on Farewell Spit in 1962, there has been a steady decline. In the last 30 years or so the maximum recorded was 28 (1995), and in recent years it has all but vanished from the Spit.

Eurasian Whimbrel

Numenius phaeopus

A shrink-wrapped version of the curlew, it was also mostly confined to Farewell Spit. Although numbers have dramatically decreased on Farewell Spit it still continues to appear in ones and twos elsewhere. In recent years, Waimea Inlet, particularly Bell Island shellbank, and Motueka Sandspit have the most sightings. Sometimes the odd bird will overwinter, as with one which hung around with the godwit flock at Nelson Haven from December 2008 to March 2010. On Farewell Spit there were as many as 49 counted in February 1993 and 21 in February 2003. Nowadays, a sighting of 2 or 3 is a notable achievement.

Bar-tailed Godwit ~ Kuaka

Limosa lapponica

The most numerous of the Arctic waders in the region in summer, they gather in large flocks at conspicuous high tide roosts on beaches and in estuaries and disperse to feed on mudflats, and occasionally on adjacent paddocks in wet weather. Farewell Spit holds the largest numbers in the region. Other roost sites include Whanganui Inlet, Pakawau, Collingwood, Rototai, Motueka Sandspit, Bell Island shellbank and Nelson Haven. On king tides, these can form 'super roosts' with Nelson Haven and Waimea Inlet birds flying to Motueka Sandspit, and the Farewell Spit numbers augmented by Pakawau and Collingwood flocks.

Re-sightings of individually colour-banded birds show a high site fidelity each summer, as well as some local movement between roosts. These colour bands also reveal that some birds have been making the approximately 29,000 km New Zealand-Yellow Sea-Alaska-New Zealand migration for at least 20 years. It's a humbling experience to look at



BAR-TAILED GODWIT - KUAKA The marked bird was flagged on 10 April 2021 at the Yalu River Estuary in north-east China; many of New Zealand's Bar-tailed Godwits stage at this site on northward migration to their Alaskan breeding grounds. PHOTO Craig Martin

these birds and think what sort of palaver it would take for us humans to attempt to do even one such triangular trip. Some 10% of the summer birds remain over winter, these being largely immatures. Farewell Spit supports the largest numbers.

Between 2001 and 2012 about 19,000 birds were present in the region during the summer. This declined to about 17,000 birds between 2012 and 2021, which is in line with the national trend.

Ruddy Turnstone

Arenaria interpres

This small, distinctively patterned wader is most commonly recorded at Farewell Spit and Motueka Sandspit. They are best seen at Motueka when at roost on the sandspit before they disperse to feed. In summer, over 200 birds can be seen on the sandspit. At Farewell Spit they fossick on the tideline on the ocean beach. A single bird has been known to drop in to Nelson Haven on passing, and they occur in small numbers (generally less than 20) in Waimea Inlet.

Red Knot ~ Huahou

Calidris canutus

Like a sawn-off version of a Bar-tailed Godwit, it is most often seen at roost or feeding on the mudflats with their larger cousins. Most populous on Farewell Spit (about 9,000 in 2022), with smaller numbers at Whanganui Inlet, Motueka Sandspit and Waimea Estuary. Red Knots are noticeably missing from Nelson Haven, with just a handful of mainly spring sightings of 1-2 birds in recent years.

The most accessible low tide site is the mudflats off Motueka Quay where they can be seen feeding with godwits, oystercatchers, Turnstones, Pied Stilts and, on passage, Wrybills.

The predominant subspecies of Red Knot in New Zealand is *C. c. rogersi*, which breeds on Chukotka Peninsula, north-east Siberia, with *C. c. piersmai*, breeding in the New Siberian Islands, northern Siberia, also present.



RED KNOT - HUAHOU This bird was flagged at Westernport, Victoria, Australia and subsequently became a regular summer visitor to Motueka Sandspit. **PHOTO** Craig Martin

Pomarine Skua

Stercorarius pomarinus

Arctic Skua

Stercorarius parasiticus

Both of these skua species are present around the coastline in the region during the summer, having vacated their Arctic breeding grounds. The Arctic Skua is by far the more common of the two, and generally, careful identification is needed to separate them. They both come in a variety of plumages, the rule of thumb being, if a direct comparison can be made, the Arctic Skua is about the same size as the White-fronted Terns it so likes chasing down for fish, while the Pomarine Skua dwarves the terns.

Sites where skuas can be observed include the entrance of Nelson Harbour, off the Boulder Bank at the Glen and at the top of Boulder Bank Drive, off Motueka Sandspit, as well as the Golden Bay coastline. Whenever you see a feeding frenzy of gulls and terns offshore, it is well worth checking out for either, or both, of these piratical species.

Red-billed Gull ~ Tarāpunga

Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae

The Red-billed Gull is found throughout the region, in estuaries, harbours and open coasts, as well as in urban areas and wet pastures. Nelson Haven and Tahunanui would seem to have the highest numbers of this species in the region, with several records of more than 1,000 birds. Up to 400 birds have been recorded feeding in tight formation on the Nelson Wastewater Treatment Plant wetlands.

Regular breeding colonies have been recorded at Bird Island (near Collingwood), Rototai, Motueka Sandspit and the Nelson Haven Boulder Bank. Although most of the population is presumed to be resident in the region, there is augmentation from elsewhere, with banded birds from the Kaikoura colony having been recorded here. There has been a colony on the Boulder Bank since at least 1943-4. It was said to hold 500 to 1,000 pairs in the 1990 edition. A 2015 count had 761 active nests and a December 2016 count recorded 400 pairs. This would seem to reflect the nationwide decline in their numbers. However, a 2022 survey using drone images gave a preliminary count of 2,188 nests, so maybe this colony is bucking this downwards trend.



RED-BILLED GULL - TARĀPUNGA nesting on the Boulder Bank, Nelson. There has been a colony there since at least 1943-4. PHOTO Paul Griffiths

Black-billed Gull ~ Tarāpuka

Chroicocephalus bulleri

The Black-billed Gull is more of an inland gull than the Red-billed Gull but is found mostly along the coast in the Nelson/Tasman region as an autumn/winter visitor. Some breeding takes place on the coast, the most notable site being Motueka Sandspit which held up to 60 pairs in 2016/17. Re-sightings of marked birds indicate many of the visitors come from nesting colonies along the Wairau River in Marlborough. The largest wintering flocks have been recorded at Rototai and Farewell Spit, Golden Bay.

Inland within the region, these endemic gulls have nested on the Buller and Howard Rivers in 2020 and 2021, sometimes with Black-fronted Terns. Birds have also been seen on the Motueka River near Tapawera, with breeding confirmed in 2022-3. The lake front at Lake Rotoiti is a reliable place to see this species in winter, as is the main street in Murchison.

Given the chance, it will follow the plough.

Southern Black-backed Gull ~ Karoro

Larus dominicanus

These large gulls are common throughout the region, found in a wide range of habitats, marine, coastal and inland. Expert opportunists, they can be seen on pastures and recently ploughed land, on river beds, in urban areas and on landfills. A few birds are present in the high country, where some breed in river valleys and near subalpine tarns. They breed either in colonies or as one or two pairs, dotted along the coastline, with the largest breeding colony in the region continuing to be on Nelson's Boulder Bank. Other noted breeding sites are on Motueka Sandspit and around the Abel Tasman coastline. Begging young, looking far too big to be doing so, are a noisy feature of the coast well into autumn.

Caspian Tern ~ Taranui

Hydroprogne caspia

This large tern is not an uncommon sight – or sound, as it announces itself with its harsh guttural call – in coastal areas of the region. About 7% of the country's breeding pairs nest in Nelson/Tasman, with colonies at Bell Island shellbank, Rototai and Farewell Spit. With their large bright red bills, deep black cap and legs, contrasting with the clean white and pale grey of the rest of the body, in breeding plumage they make a very handsome and striking sight.

Dispersing after breeding, birds banded at Bell Island shellbank have been resighted as far north as Auckland, as well as on the West Coast. It can be seen at high tide roosts, including at the top of Nelson Haven, Motueka Sandspit and the tidal flats at the base of Farewell Spit. Birds flying up and down the Waimea Inlet can be observed from Tic Toc Road or the Rough Island bridge.

In 1990 the Bell Island colony had not long been established and had 15 pairs. It is still going, with 30-40 nests a season, despite its vulnerability to wash-out on high spring tides. Overall, its numbers are stable, as are those for Farewell Spit and Rototai.

Black-fronted Tern ~ Tarapirohe

Chlidonias albastriatus

The Nelson/Tasman region has Black-fronted Terns either inland or on the coast throughout the year. Small numbers breed or attempt to breed inland, on the upper Buller, Howard, Mātakitaki, Waimea and Motueka Rivers, with breeding confirmed in 2022-3 on the latter near Tapawera. From November to January the birds can be seen hawking over the rivers or adjacent paddocks and roosting on shingle banks in the riverbed. On the coast they have attempted to breed downstream of the Motueka River bridge, Motueka, but without success due to human disturbance. They have suffered a similar lack of breeding success at the junction of the Appleby and Wai-iti rivers.

Generally seen in small numbers, they can congregate in large flocks of 200 and more, with 280 seen roosting off Rough Island in March 2015 and 230 at the top of Nelson Haven in April 2006.

White-fronted Tern ~ Tara

Sterna striata

Although some are resident, the majority of White-fronted Terns are breeding visitors to the region between late October and early May. They are capricious nesters, liable to desert a colony *en masse* if disturbed, in some years failing to return to their previous breeding sites. They are a coastal species, nesting and roosting on rocky coasts, shellbanks and sandbars. Their main breeding colonies are the Nelson end of the Boulder Bank and Rototai, Golden Bay; in some years they nest on Motueka Sandspit, with nesting also having taken place at Bell Island shellbank and on the short-lived Sand Island, out from the Nelson airport.

During summer they can be a conspicuous member of the feeding frenzies often seen off the coast. Two hundred or so can be seen gathered on the Boulder Bank at the top of Boulder Bank Drive, with adults returning from sea carrying small fish for their awaiting young.

By winter, most birds have moved out of the region, with birds banded as chicks on the Boulder Bank having been seen at Waikanae in the south of the North Island, Kaikoura and at Karamea, and one at Long Reef, Sydney, Australia nine months after banding.

Little Penguin ~ Kororā

Eudyptula minor

The Little Penguin is an increasingly rare sight around the region's coastline. They may be seen coming ashore at dusk during the breeding season (late winter to midsummer), and otherwise floating offshore around the coast. They can be seen offshore of Abel Tasman National Park in Tasman Bay, most ideally by kayak. A census for Project Janszoon between 2013 and 2015 recorded approximately 250 active burrows between Wainui and the Anchorage. They are prone to being beach-wrecked.

A decrease in numbers over the previous few years was noted in the 1990 edition, with many of its breeding sites being deserted, usually because of human interference and dogs. This decline seems to have continued with the ever-increasing human activity around the coast. There are several community groups working to ensure safe breeding sites for Little Penguins in Golden Bay and Tasman Bay.

White-capped Albatross ~ Toroa

Thalassarche cauta

These majestic soarers are fairly common out to sea where they can be encountered in anything from ones and twos to getting on for a hundred birds. The best way to see them is by boat, as with all of the other tubenoses that occur in the region. In rough weather, it is worth looking out to sea from the shore around the coast as they often then approach closer to land. Over 70 birds were seen from the top of Boulder Bank Drive on 25th May 2009. Probably the best onshore “seawatching” sites are from Cape Farewell and Pillar Point in Golden Bay.

Northern Giant Petrel ~ Pāngurunguru

Macronectes halli

These large brown petrels are not uncommon in small numbers out to sea, but are far less commonly seen inshore. They are often viewed from a distance, when they cannot necessarily be separated from their close relative, Southern Giant Petrel Pāngurunguru *Macronectes giganteus*. Such sightings are put into the ‘Giant Petrel species’ basket. They are usually only seen in flight in the region - an effortless and somewhat menacing affair – or on the water, but occasionally disorientated or undernourished juvenile birds are compelled to land. If they do so, it is usually on the coast, such as at Rabbit Island and Nelson Haven, though one bird was rescued after ending up in 88 Valley Road, Wakefield. They will accompany fishing vessels in the bays.

Their heyday in the region appears to have been in the 1980s when in winter up to 50 could be seen scavenging about the sewage outlet, off the Boulder Bank. Improved waste treatment has removed this food source.

Flesh-footed Shearwater ~ Toanui

Ardenna carneipes

This is one of the commoner tubenose summer visitors. The best way to see them is on a boat out in the bays, though birds can be seen close to land on occasions, such as off Cape Farewell and Nelson's Boulder Bank. The nearest breeding colonies are in the Marlborough Sounds (mainly Titi Island), and it can frequently be found following fishing boats.

Fluttering Shearwater ~ Pakahā

Puffinus gavia

This is a very common species in the region, and can be seen at any time of the year, feeding inshore in large flocks or moving along the coast in streams so long that they may take 10-20 minutes to pass the observer (10,000 plus birds is not unusual). No other sea bird occurs in such numbers in the region's waters. The nearest large colonies are in the Marlborough Sounds.

It has declined drastically since 1990 as a breeding bird in the region with what were important numbers nesting mainly on offshore islets from Nguroa Bay to Cape Farewell being reduced to the hopeful pair or so. A translocation programme started in 2022 at the fenced Wharariki Ecosanctuary aims to re-establish the species as a breeding bird in north-west Nelson.

Sooty Shearwater ~ Titi

Ardenna grisea

An abundant bird nationally with a population estimated at 21 million, our region sees a tiny percentage of this species in its waters. Small numbers breed at various locations in the Marlborough Sounds, and it is just about clinging on as a breeding bird in the region at Tunnel Island and at Fossil Point, on the ocean side of the base of Farewell Spit. Formerly, it bred in good numbers on islets offshore from Nguroa Bay to Cape Farewell. Within Tasman Bay it has bred on the few small islands off Abel Tasman National Park and on an islet off Pepin Island. A few breeding pairs persist.

Onshore, it is probably best seen from the clifftops about Cape Farewell, and between September and May.

Fairy Prion ~ Titī Wainui

Pachyptila turtur

The nearest Fairy Prion breeding colonies are in the outer Marlborough Sounds, with Stephen's Island, the country's largest colony, hosting about 1.8 million pairs. They can occur in the region as singles and small groups of birds, and will also flock in hundreds, with 800 being recorded south-east of Farewell Spit in December 2010. They are not usually seen from shore, being found mostly out to sea in pelagic waters where they are common. In rough weather they will come closer to shore, which is not always good news, for they are one of the species more likely to be found beach wrecked along our coast.

White-chinned Petrel ~ Karetai Kauae Mā

Procellaria aequinoctialis

Westland Petrel ~ Tāiko

Procellaria westlandica

Black Petrel ~ Tāiko

Procellaria parkinsoni

These are three very similar species, generally requiring close views for a positive identification. Westland Petrel is by far the more common, generally seen when passing through from its breeding grounds (the world's only) near Punakaiki on the West Coast on their way to cross the Pacific Ocean to the seas off southern South America. Cape Farewell Track and Ocean Beach, Farewell Spit in Golden Bay are the best places onshore to see this species. In the 1990 edition, Black Petrel was said to be 'rarely seen' - there seems to be no record of it in our region since. Not included in the 1990 edition, the last record for White-chinned Petrel was a single bird seen off Golden Bay in November 2013, though a dead one was

found on Bell Island shellbank in 2023. That said, it is probably a regular winter bird out in the bays.

Buller's Shearwater ~ Rako

Ardenna bulleri

The only place in the world this species breeds is on the Poor Knights Islands, near Whangārei. In the winter they head off to the North Pacific, spending most of their time off Japan. Consequently, most sightings locally are over the summer period, with numbers ranging from the ones and twos to several hundred. Apart from when at sea, the best place to see this species is from the Cape Farewell Track and from the Ocean Beach, Farewell Spit, Golden Bay.

There appears to have been an increase in numbers in the region since 1990 and, with it being more of a warmwater species, this is potentially indicative of rising sea temperatures locally.

Common Diving Petrel ~ Kuaka

Pelecanoides urinatrix

Unless you are out to sea, where small flocks can be seen passing through, you are more likely to come across these small seabirds as beach wrecks. As with Fluttering and Sooty Shearwaters, they nested in locally significant numbers on islets offshore from Nguroa Bay to Cape Farewell, north-west Nelson. These have since been more or less extirpated, with last breeding (a single stray chick on Wharariki Beach) evidenced in 2021.

Australasian Gannet ~ Tākapu

Morus serrator

Gannets, with their spectacular plunge dives for fish, are frequently seen along the coasts of the Nelson/Tasman region, particularly in Golden Bay and at Farewell Spit. The only breeding colony in the region was established in 1983 at the eastern end of the Spit. It is the only sea level colony in the country. As with most of Farewell Spit, the colony is not accessible to the general public other than through Farewell



AUSTRALASIAN GANNET - TĀKAPU flying into the Farewell Spit colony with a beak full of nesting material. PHOTO Paul Griffiths

Spit Eco Tours. Birds can be seen offshore at any time of the year, and occasionally enter Nelson Harbour and the Haven.

Apart from visiting the Farewell Spit colony, the best way of seeing these birds is in a boat offshore. Otherwise, on a highish tide and a good dose of luck, when driving along the Pakawau straight there's the chance of watching a frenzy of them diving just offshore.

From an initial 70 nests in 1983/4 the Farewell Spit colony grew to 2,000 nests in 1994/5 and to about 3,000 in 2001. Since the last analysed survey in 2010 numbers appear to be fairly stable at almost 4,000 pairs, despite significant erosion of the colony site by southerly winds.

Little Shag ~ Kawaupaka

Microcarbo melanoleucos

Little Shags, with their variable black-and-white plumage and characteristic short yellow bill, are frequently seen in ones and twos and

small groups along much of the coast, and on rivers and lakes inland.

They usually nest in trees which over-hang water, in colonies of their own species or with Pied Shags, though they do not nest all year round like the latter do. Two of the most accessible places to see them nesting are at Greenslade Park, Rough Island (alongside Pied Shags) and in Nelson's Queen's Gardens, though this latter colony seems to be much reduced of late. A nascent colony at Hoddy Estuary Park could be well worth keeping a check on.



LITTLE SHAG - KAWAUPAKA is one of the four species of black-footed shags found in the region. PHOTO Willie Cook

Black Shag ~ Māpunga

Phalacrocorax carbo

This large shag is found on coastal waters as well as inland on rivers and freshwater lakes and ponds. It nests inland, with no large nesting colonies in the region but most rivers have small groups of birds nesting in trees alongside the water. Usually seen feeding singly, they can form small flocks to forage cooperatively. In winter there is a movement of

birds to the coast, this being reflected in increased roost size in winter. These roosts can be up to 70 to 80 birds, most noticeably at Rangihaeata, Golden Bay. Smaller numbers sometimes roost on Fifeshire Rock with Spotted Shags.

Pied Shag ~ Kāruhiruhi

Phalacrocorax varius

This elegant black-and-white bird is mainly a coastal species, occasionally occurring inland at coastal lagoons and lakes. It is more common in Tasman Bay than Golden Bay. It nests all year, generally doing so in mature trees, with sites including Haulashore Island, Rough Island, Split Apple Rock, in Tasman Bay and Green Hills in Golden Bay. The Haulashore Island colony is the result of birds being induced to move from nesting and roosting in Norfolk pines on Rocks Road, Nelson, in 1990.

As with Little Shags, the colony at Greenslade Park, Rough Island, is very accessible. Birds can be seen in the trees with young of varying ages, as well as loafing by the adjacent channel.

Little Black Shag ~ Kawau Tūi

Phalacrocorax sulcirostris

Although single birds are sometimes seen (a trap for the unwary), Little Black Shags are generally a gregarious species. A visitor to the region, they are more commonly seen in winter, and have not yet been known to breed here. The least common shag in the region, they are coastal, and typically seen at roost, or more spectacularly, feeding in a tight group where they 'herd' fish in shallow waters. They make a fine sight in flight, flying low over the water in V-formation.

Waimea Inlet and Nelson Haven in Tasman Bay, and Pohara Beach and Rototai in Golden Bay have hosted some of the more regular sightings of this species.

Spotted Shag ~ Kawau Tikitiki

Phalacrocorax punctatus

By far the most striking of the shags in the region – especially when in their punk-like breeding plumage – they are found in harbours, estuaries, and in coastal waters out to about 16 kms. They can often be found feeding out to sea with Fluttering Shearwaters and White-fronted Terns. The region's biggest breeding colonies are at Tata Islands, Golden Bay, with small colonies dotted around the coast, mostly in cliff areas.

Numbers are augmented from outside the region in winter with roosts found mainly on cliffs, rocky shores and sandy beaches. They hit the national headlines with their massed gatherings of up to 3,000 birds in 2009 on Tata Beach and their associated pebble ('rangle') disgorging.

In winter they can be seen during the day resting at such places as Nelson Harbour breakwater, Motueka Harbour entrance, and Onekaka Wharf. Long lines can be seen flying low across the bays to and from their night roosts.

Spotted Shag was recorded as not yet nesting in the region in the 1990 edition. Winter numbers have increased in the last 30 years, despite the Tata Beach roost having slumped markedly to about 450 in 2018 and 300 in July 2021. The Tata Islands colonies remain the largest in the region with 211 nests counted in 2023.

Cattle Egret

Bubulcus ibis

In the autumn and winter months it is worth checking any herd of cattle you come across in case there's a small flock of these birds pecking about in attendance. Most usually found with stock in damp pastures, they will occasionally pop up in estuaries in the region, as two did off Tic Toc Road, Rough Island from January to March 2003. It has not been known to breed in New Zealand, birds presumably returning to Australia to do so.

The first report of this species in New Zealand was a local one, in the Upper Moutere area in 1956. Their numbers in the region, and New



CATTLE EGRET in breeding plumage. Most birds seen in the region are in their all white non-breeding plumage. PHOTO Steve Wood

Zealand as a whole, reached a peak in the late 1980s and have declined steadily since. The 1990 edition notes that at Appleby and near Takaka flocks of 20-40 egrets are typically present from May to mid-November. Censuses in 1986 and 1990 recorded maxima of 48 in the Takaka area and 47 at Appleby. Whilst these remain the best locations to see these birds, they are no longer seen annually and a flock of a dozen or so is a good sighting.

White Heron ~ Kōtuku

Ardea alba

There being only one place in New Zealand where White Herons breed – a long established colony near Okarito on the West Coast – any bird seen in the region is only visiting. They can be faithful visitors though, with ‘Hamish’ famously returning each year to the wharf at Mapua for at least 18 years.

White Herons are most often seen in estuaries, as well as damp pastures and sometimes even in gardens. One bird was seen taking small birds in a Hope garden, and one cleaning out the goldfish pond on a property at Brightwater.

They are solitary birds on the whole, with occasionally up to 3 seen together. Moutere Inlet, Whanganui Inlet and the coast from Totara Avenue to Pūponga have proved over the years to be some of the more reliable locations.

White-faced Heron ~ Matuku Moana

Egretta novaehollandiae

The White-faced Heron is widespread throughout the region, particularly around estuaries, swamps and wet pastures. It has even been recorded in the upper parts of rivers in Nelson Lakes National Park above the bush-line. Locally, it is often called the Blue Heron, on account of its soft bluey-grey plumage.

It nests in large trees, generally alongside or near water.

There is some movement of birds to the coast, with numbers increasing over autumn/winter, though whether these birds come from inland in the region or outside of it is yet to be determined.

One of the best places to see this species feeding is on an outgoing tide off Motueka Quay.

Although there have not been any formal censuses in the region, numbers of this species have undoubtedly increased in the last three decades. The high tide gathering of up to 20 birds found at the top of Nelson Haven noted in the 1990 edition exceeded 70 in August 2020.

Little Egret

Egretta garzetta

Visitors from Australia, these birds are markedly smaller than the White Heron and similar in size to Cattle Egret, though with a longer, darker bill. The yellow soles of their feet are often visible in flight, while they are walking on firm mud or when high-stepping through water intent on

their prey. Most usually encountered in the region in coastal estuaries, one bird was observed inland in Dovedale in June 2023.

The most likely site to see Little Egret remains the Waimea Inlet, particularly off Tic Toc Road, Rough Island, though sightings in recent years have been few and far between.

Reef Heron ~ Matuku Moana

Egretta sacra

Reef Herons are exclusively coastal birds, with a preference for rocky shores and are not common in the region. Solitary birds may be seen in their typical crouched posture particularly within Abel Tasman National Park and adjacent offshore islands where they are known to breed in rocky crevices. It is also worth keeping an eye open for them on associated estuaries and sandy beaches. Pohara Beach has been a very accessible location to see these generally hard to see birds – on a good day, you don't even need to get out of your motor vehicle (or off your bicycle seat) to watch one stalking its way along the beach through the shallows. As well as Pohara Beach, the coastline through to Tata Beach is also excellent Reef Heron country. Multiple sightings have been made about Motueka, and very occasionally about Nelson.

Australasian Bittern ~ Matuku-hūrepo

Botaurus poiciloptilus

'The continuing encroachment and disturbance of the region's coastal and freshwater wetlands makes this naturally secretive bird even more difficult to see.' So begins the entry for the 1990 edition and this still very much applies today.

Sightings have been made over the years at Pearl Creek, Nelson Haven/Wakapuaka, Rakopi and Farewell Spit. Only at Mangarakau Swamp, to the south of Whanganui Inlet, has the bird held its own, and that is only after intensive targeted restoration and protection work aimed at this species. In 2017, 15 males were recorded booming there. Other restoration work, for example, at Pearl Creek, Appleby, has been

undertaken with the hope of restoring Bittern numbers. It is a highly mobile species and can crop up anywhere in suitable habitat. The trick is for them to stay and breed.

It is in critical decline both nationally and locally. Maungarakau Swamp allows us a glimpse of what things could be like for this iconic species.

Royal Spoonbill ~ Kōtuku Ngutupapa

Platalea regia

With its crown of feathers and large spatulate beak, the Royal Spoonbill is well named. Unlike the only other large white bird in the region, the White Heron, it is gregarious and found in communal high tide roosts. There has been no record of breeding in the region, though there has been some tantalising teasing – stick carrying to the Pied Shag colony



ROYAL SPOONBILL – KŌTUKU NGUTUPAPA Still not yet a breeding bird in the region, surely it is just a matter of time before it finds a nesting site that is up to scratch? PHOTO Charmaine Field

on Rough Island, for example. There is evidence of movement of birds through the region both pre- and post- breeding, as well as a noticeable increase in numbers over winter.

Roost sites include the Boulder Bank, Nelson; off Whakatu Drive; out from Grossi Point, Mapua; off Wharf Road, Motueka Estuary, and in Golden Bay at Collingwood and on Farewell Spit. They disperse from these roosts to feed mainly in nearby or adjacent estuaries.

They are prone to disturbance; the roost off Tic Toc Road, Rough Island, has gradually been deserted since the substantial increase of traffic in the last decade along this road.

Swamp Harrier ~ Kāhu

Circus approximans

One of only two birds of prey in New Zealand, the Swamp Harrier is by far the commonest being found throughout the region and easily seen hunting over farmland and open country, including estuaries and wetlands. Harriers frequently scavenge road-killed carcasses. When driving you should slow down as you approach feeding birds, as they cannot always take to the air in time, many being reluctant to take leave



SWAMP HARRIER - KĀHU Too often, they run the risk of becoming roadkill themselves. PHOTO Steve Wood

of their meal. In spring, if you hear a series of high-pitched calls piercing out of the sky, there's a good chance you will be rewarded with a pair of Harriers performing their aerially acrobatic courtship display.

Morepork ~ Ruru

Ninox novaeseelandiae

The only surviving native owl species, Morepork are to be found from native and exotic forests to suburban parks and gardens. Being nocturnal, they are more often heard than seen. While their two-syllable call of 'more-pork' is the most widely known of the region's night time bird sounds, they also have a varied repertoire of less familiar hoots, squawks, yelps and cries, the latter two being suggestive of Little Owls and kiwis, respectively.

Generally, they are seen more by good fortune than anything, whether they are spotted at day time roost or when attracted to lights at night in the hope of moths to prey on. The latter leaves them very vulnerable to window and vehicle strike alike.

Little Owl ~ Ruru Nohinohi (Introduced)

Athene noctua

The Little Owl was introduced to the country in the early 20th century in an attempt to control small introduced birds in orchards and grain crops. Within New Zealand it is found only in the South Island. It overlaps little with the native Morepork, and is most common in farmland areas, where its small, rounder form and habit of being more crepuscular allow it to be distinguished from the latter. It will perch on such vantage points as fenceposts, power poles and in trees and has a distinctive loud, high pitched 'kiew-kiew' call.

It is most commonly encountered on the Waimea Plains and the farmlands of Golden Bay, though numbers have declined over the years.

New Zealand Kingfisher ~ Kōtare

Todiramphus sanctus

Kingfishers occur in a wide range of habitats including forest, farmland, river margins, parks, estuaries and rocky coasts. They have a marked seasonal variation in distribution. During the winter they are abundant along the coast, particularly on estuaries where they can frequently be seen on a rock or post on the lookout for prey, in particular crabs. In early spring many birds desert the coast for more inland breeding sites, where they nest in holes in dead trees or clay banks. Their loud, rather persistent call repeated from tree tops in suburban parks or beech forests is usually the first indication of their presence during spring and summer.

New Zealand Falcon ~ Kārearea

Falco novaeseelandiae

The falcon is a smaller, and noisier, bird than the Swamp Harrier, with more pointed wings, making it faster and more agile in flight. It often draws attention to itself by its strident 'kek kek kek' call. Falcons – also known locally as 'sparrowhawks' – nest from above the treeline to coastal



NEW ZEALAND FALCON – KĀREAREA with its kill of Rock Pigeon/Kererū Aropari
in a suburban Richmond garden. PHOTO Don Cooper

lowland areas, mainly on the edge of native and plantation forests and on rocky slopes. Resident birds have been recorded in such places as Pohara, Mount Starveall and Lower Wangapeka Valley. Dispersing juveniles can be encountered just about anywhere, including in the middle of Nelson. They may just be passing through or they may spend a few months in the area.

Kaka ~ Kākā

Nestor meridionalis

Kaka are distributed throughout the main tracts of forest in the region but are most commonly seen in Nelson Lakes National Park (particularly around Lakes Rotorua and Rotoiti), the Flora catchment in Kahurangi National Park and the Bark Bay area of Abel Tasman National Park. These areas are home to long-term pest eradication projects aimed predominantly at stopping stoat predation at the nest. In the case of Abel Tasman National Park, Project Janszoon has run a successful introduction programme since 2016 in response to Kaka having been declared functionally extinct in the park.

The occasional Kaka will stray off course, as with birds seen near Riuwaka and at the top of the Aniseed Valley.

Kea

Nestor notabilis

The Kea is reasonably common in the mountains of Nelson Lakes National Park and Kahurangi National Park, with its stronghold in the latter. The vehicle accesses to the Mount Robert carpark, Rainbow skifield (technically in Marlborough), Flora carpark, Canaan or the Cobb Reservoir all offer a good chance of seeing this bird, particularly during winter – though there is some evidence that sightings at these road end carparks have decreased. Trampers and climbers will frequently encounter birds above the bushline, sometimes singly and at other times in flocks. These flocks could be up to 20 birds in 1990 – today, seeing half that number would seem to be a rare treat. There has not been the same historical conflict with humans, particularly concerning attacks on

sheep, as has happened further south in their range, but they can still cause damage to property which is not always appreciated.

Juvenile birds are inclined to wander, and have been recorded as far afield as the lighthouse at Farewell Spit and Glenduan, north of Nelson.

Vulnerable to predation at the nest by stoats and cats, the population locally is in decline. Control of these predators has proven beneficial at Nelson Lakes and the Flora catchment.

Yellow-crowned Parakeet ~ Kākāriki

Cyanoramphus auriceps

Yellow-crowned Parakeet are restricted to larger tracts of native forest in our region. They are not abundant and there are no sites where their presence can be assured. The Flora carpark, Kahurangi National Park and the Braeburn Walk, Lake Rotorua, Nelson Lakes National Park provide access into good parakeet habitat. Since 2014 Project Janszoon and DOC have released captive-bred birds in the upland areas of the Abel Tasman National Park where, with the help of predator control, they have increased in range and abundance.

Close encounters with parakeets are generally a matter of luck; most commonly it begins with the sound of chatter from somewhere above, then, if you are fortunate enough, a long-tailed silhouette or two flying directly and well above the canopy. The Flora catchment remains the most likely place in the region to experience these heartwarming fly-bys.

Despite extensive predator control and reintroductions, the overall numbers of these birds have decreased over the last three decades, as has their range.

Orange-fronted Parakeet ~ Kākāriki Karaka

Cyanoramphus malherbi

Since November 2021 there have been seven translocations to the Brook Waimārama Sanctuary totalling 125 birds. A survey in July 2023 recorded 170 birds, most of them unbanded. Prior to this, the last sighting in the region was in the D'Urville Valley, Nelson Lakes National Park in 1965. The

sanctuary currently supports about one third of the world population of this critically endangered endemic species.

Rifleman ~ Tititipounamu

Accanthisitta chloris

The Rifleman, New Zealand's smallest bird, is largely restricted to native forests. Its presence is usually first revealed by high-pitched calls given as the birds are busy fossicking, generally high up in the canopy, making it a very effective indicator species for age related hearing loss in humans. In the Nelson/Tasman region it is now found mainly in higher altitude forests where rats are less abundant and where they can be locally common. Some of the more accessible of these forests are at Mount Robert, Flora Saddle and at Canaan on the edge of Abel Tasman National Park. They are also common on the forested parts of the Heaphy Track.



ROCK WREN - PĪWAUWĀU, along with Rifleman/Tititipounamu, are the last two remaining species of the ancient, endemic New Zealand Wrens. They occupy a unique position in evolutionary history, forming a sister group to all the world's other passerines (perching birds). PHOTO Rebecca Bowater

Rock Wren ~ Pīwauwau

Xenicus gilviventris

Found only in the South Island, the region holds its northern-most populations. It is a bird of alpine and sub-alpine areas above the treeline, where it is patchily distributed. Pairs may be encountered on ridgetops or high passes within Kahurangi National Park, occupying areas of jumbled rock and scrub. A tricky bird to track down, probably the most accessible population is on the Peel Range above the Cobb Valley in Golden Bay where a predator trapping programme is run by the Friends of Cobb.

Bellbird ~ Korimako

Anthornis melanura

Bellbirds, with their mossy green plumage, are widespread in the region, particularly in native bush, where they feed on insects, fruit and nectar, and the honeydew of the lower beech forests. They are important pollinators for native trees and shrubs. Territorial during the breeding season, when only ones or twos are met at any one time, they can flock at food sources, and in winter can be found in loose groups. Their song is emblematic of the bush, though care has to be taken in distinguishing them from their close cousin, the Tui, whose generally signature coughs and wheezes can be mimicked by the Bellbird. They are not so commonly seen in suburban gardens and parks as the Tui, but do visit when particular foods are available, such as flax flowers or the berries of native and ornamental shrubs.

The Brook Waimārama Sanctuary and the Bellbird Walk at Lake Rotoiti are just two places where Bellbirds can be heard in their glory.

Tui ~ Tūī

Prothemadera novaeseelandiae

The Tui is one of the most striking native birds, with its iridescent plumage, white lacy shawl, and its seemingly limitless repertoire of cries, coughs, wheezes, whistles and mimicry. It is well worth getting as close as you can

to a Tui in full voice, as you can see the two poi-like feathers on its throat bounce about as it vocalises, as well as hear the intricate murmurings and mutterings of its soft undersong.

It is a very mobile species, travelling long distances to particular food sources, and is as likely to be seen in suburban gardens as forests at most times of the year. Tui depend on nectar for much of the year, when insects or fruits are in short supply, and seek out the flowers of many plants including flax, kōwhai, pōhutukawa and eucalyptus species. Disputes over such food resources can be accompanied by noisy, high-speed chases when their wings make a whirring sound. When in flower in spring, the small stand of kōwhai along the driveway at Snowden Bush Reserve, Brightwater, is host to such rumbustious gatherings.

Grey Warbler ~ Riroriro

Gerygone igata

Grey Warbler is the most widespread native bird in the region and can be found in all scrub and forest areas, as well as suburban gardens and parks, and is least common in high altitude tussocklands. It is more often heard than seen with its high trilling song carrying a surprising distance as it forages for insects amongst the foliage. Smaller than the Silvereye, with which it is often found, it has a short, white tipped tail, which is conspicuously flicked. Grey Warblers build a hanging nest, completely covered except for a small round entrance on the side. It has the dubious honour of being the main host species for the Shining Cuckoo.

Brown Creeper ~ Pīpipi

Mohoua novaeseelandiae

The Brown Creeper is one of the least known birds of the South Island bush, but is not uncommon in certain habitats. In autumn and winter, it forms small flocks that move rapidly through the forest canopy, constantly chattering. These are often mixed-flocks with other birds such as Silvereye, Fantail and Grey Warbler joining in. More common in higher altitudes, particularly in beech forests, it also frequents mānuka and kānuka scrub

and plantation forestry, and can be found down to sea level. It is the sole host in the region of the Long-tailed Cuckoo.

Sites worth a look are the Mount Robert track in Nelson Lakes National Park and Flora Saddle and parts of the Heaphy Track in Kahurangi National Park. If you suspect their presence, a squeaky noise such as sucking on the back of your hand will often bring them closer.

Australian Magpie ~ Makipai (Introduced)

Gymnorhina tibicen

Of the introduced species in the region, this is the only one originating from Australia rather than Europe. It is generally uncommon in the region, and is rarely seen in Golden Bay. Confined mainly to farmland, small numbers are found in such habitat, most commonly about Tapawera, Murchison and alongside State Highway 6 south of Wakefield. Despite its evocative '*quardle oodle ardle wardle doodle*' call, it is an officially unwelcomed bird, being classified as a pest to be eradicated from Golden Bay.

Since 1990 there has been marked increase in population and expansion of range.

Fantail ~ Piwakawaka

Rhipidura fuliginosa

The Fantail, with its flashing white tail and urgent sounding squeaks, is one of the most familiar of the native birds, for it often approaches the observer in its search for flying insects. It is at home in a wide range of habitats, including forests of all types, scrub, orchards and suburban gardens. Its numbers seem to fluctuate a great deal, both throughout the year and from year to year. Early in the breeding season in October/November it can be hard to find any birds (especially in more urban areas), but by January family groups may appear anywhere, and flocks of birds may occur in winter.

There are two forms of Fantail, the more usually seen pied and the far less common black. In this region about one in every ten birds is black.

Tomtit ~ Ngirungiru

Petroica macrocephala

The Tomtit is largely restricted to native forest. It can be found at all altitudes in any of the beech forests in the interior of the region, but is most abundant in the mid-zone. It can also be found in exotic forests, and scrub but appears to steer clear of the region's suburban areas. Like their larger cousin, the South Island Robin, they are very vulnerable to introduced predators, but seem to have fared better as they spend less time on the



TOMTIT - NGIRUNGIRU Largely restricted to native forest, it is more widespread and numerous than its cousin, the South Island Robin/Kakaruai. PHOTO Bradley Shields

ground. Consequently, they are found in some areas where the Robin is not, like Torrent Bay, Abel Tasman National Park and Milnthorpe in Golden Bay. The Flora Saddle and catchment in Kahurangi National Park, around Lake Rotoiti, including the track up to Mount Robert carpark in Nelson Lakes National Park and the Brook Waimārama Sanctuary, Nelson are good places to look for this endemic bird. Both the Robin and Tomtit are more common in higher altitude forests where ship rats are less abundant.

South Island Robin ~ Kakaruai

Petroica australis

The sight of a Robin landing at your feet to pick up an insect from the leaf litter is one of the delights of the forest. However, it is one that mainly occurs in larger tracts of native forest such as Mount Richmond Forest Park, Nelson Lakes National Park and Kahurangi National Park. More rarely, it can be found in plantations of mature pines. It is a bird that has proved to be very sensitive to predation, and outside of predator-controlled areas



SOUTH ISLAND ROBIN - KAKARUAI likes to keeps an eye open for what edibles you might disturb when walking through the forest PHOTO Rebecca Bowater

it requires more and more effort to see. The odd chance sighting, as of one singing away at the top of a roadside pine at the foot of the Rai Valley saddle, cannot be discounted. Places to look for robins include Harwood's Hole Track on Takaka Hill, the Flower Brothers and Rotoroa Nature Walks, Lake Rotoroa, and the Flora Hut track in Kahurangi National Park. It can

also be found at the Brook Waimārama Sanctuary and the Dun Mountain Trail, Nelson. Despite the best efforts at pest control, their susceptibility to predation has seen a continued decrease in numbers as well as a constriction in range.

Eurasian Skylark ~ Kairaka (Introduced)

Alauda arvensis

Generally found in the coastal and interior lowlands of the region, though it can occur at higher elevations, such as on Takaka Hill. It is an unassuming looking bird when on the ground. It is in the air during the breeding season (August to January) that it really comes to its own. The male, spiralling up until lost to the naked eye, pours his song out of the sky. Whether over farmland, scrub or sand dunes it has become as integral a sound of summer as it is in its northern hemisphere homelands. It can form small feeding flocks in the winter, associating with finches, especially noticeable on the sports fields of the region.

Fernbird ~ Mātātā

Poodytes punctatus

The Fernbird has a well-earned reputation for secretiveness. However, it is strongly territorial during the breeding season (October to January), and will often approach visitors to its territory. If its interest is piqued, it will do likewise outside of the breeding season. It occupies a diverse range of habitats, including wet scrublands (including pakihi), wetland fringes, reedbeds, tussock grassland and dry shrubland. More readily heard than seen, its two-syllable call is distinctive and can sometimes be elicited by striking two stones together.

Fernbirds are generally scarce in the region with the largest numbers found in Golden Bay at such sites as Mangarakau, the marshy fringes of Whanganui Inlet, the walk across the Aorere Goldfields, Awaroa in the Abel Tasman National Park and the Goulard Downs section of the Heaphy Track. In Tasman Bay, Marahau, at the beginning of the Abel Tasman National Park track, is also a good spot to see them. In recent years a



FERNBIRD - MĀTĀTĀ More commonly heard than seen, rarely shows itself to this full extent, tattered tail and all. PHOTO Paul Griffiths

very healthy population of approximately 20 territories (49 birds banded in 2021) was discovered at Wakapuaka Flats. Unfortunately, the August 2022 floods cut a swathe through the area, reducing their numbers by about half.

A January 2024 survey of Waimea Inlet showed a promising increase in numbers from a survey in the same area 6 years previously, albeit still low numbers with 8-10 vs 1.

Welcome Swallow ~ Warou

Hirundo neoxena

A relatively recent arrival in the country, the sighting of a Welcome Swallow at Farewell Spit in 1955 was only the 5th record for the whole of New Zealand, and the first for the region. Since then, their colonisation of the region has been highly successful, taking them as far inland as Lake

Rotoiti in Nelson Lakes National Park by the mid-1970s and now found regionwide, except for alpine areas and forest tracts. There are nesting pairs under many bridges with barns, cowsheds, house porches and eaves, cliffs and coastal caves also used.

Swallows are mainly found over water, as well as paddocks, and they can congregate in flocks of several hundred whilst feeding. These flocks can be very mobile, and will move on after a few hours or a few days, depending, presumably, on food availability. It is not clear if these birds are all from the region, or whether there is migration between regions. Migration from colder areas within the region is assumed, though groups of 50 or so have been seen feeding over rivers in the Nelson Lakes National Park in the depths of winter.

Silvereye ~ Tauhou

Zosterops lateralis

The Silvereye is widespread throughout the region, and is the most abundant of native birds, occupying a range of habitats wherever trees and shrubs are present. They are at their most conspicuous in autumn/winter, when they can be seen in noisy, over-active flocks, always on the move in their search for insects or berries. They are equally at home in suburban parks and gardens as they are in native forest where they can attract a suite of other birds to join in their feeding.

Common Starling ~ Tāringi (Introduced)

Sturnus vulgaris

Starlings have adapted to all manner of habitats from seashore to salt marshes and open country, in gardens, parks, and playing fields, though they do not penetrate large areas of native forest. They tend to flock outside of the breeding season, and the pre-roost flights (murmurations) of this species can number several thousand. These congregations are noticeable as much for their sheer volume of chatter, a veritable wall of noise. Perhaps less well-known, is their wide-ranging gift for imitation and their habit of scattering their repertoire with chucklings, clickings, whistles

and gurglings. On the ground, with their strutting gait and sheened plumage, they also do a good impersonation of a 1950s movie villain.

Two of the better places to witness their evening aerobatics are the Lower Queen Street area, Richmond and over Haulashore Island.

Eurasian Blackbird ~ Manu Pango (Introduced)

Turdus merula

The Blackbird is the most widespread of species in the region, as it is over New Zealand as a whole. It is present in a great variety of habitats from the coast to the mountains, including farmland, forest edges, orchards and vineyards as well as in urban and rural parks and gardens. It is the most commonly seen verge-side bird particularly alongside roads through native and introduced forests.

In winter there can be loose aggregates of tens of birds in parks, playing fields and paddocks, especially during wet weather.

Song Thrush ~ Manu-kai-hua-rakau (Introduced)

Turdus philomelos

Song Thrushes are common and widespread in gardens, parks, farmlands (especially with hedgerows) and smaller areas of bush. After heavy rain large flocks can be seen in playing fields and paddocks.

A close relative of the Blackbird, it is generally scarcer in and around native bush than the former, and does not penetrate as deeply into mountain valleys. Also like its cousin, it is a fine songster. The ringing song of each of these birds can be mistaken for that of the other, except for the Song Thrush's habit of repeating its phrases – to sort of paraphrase the lyricist: "So good, he sings it twice".

Dunnock (Introduced)

Prunella modularis

This small brownish bird is often overlooked, or confused with the more gregarious and unrelated House Sparrow. Found usually in ones or twos, it is not dependent on human activity, unlike the House Sparrow. It is more

widespread than is usually appreciated, being found not only in gardens, parklands and open country, but also in beech forests and the subalpine scrub zone in the mountains. Once you have learned its song it will be surprising how widely you find it. It tends not to stray too far from cover.

As with so many of the apparently drab plumaged birds, it is worth a close look to fully appreciate the subtleness of its colouration.

House Sparrow ~ Tiu (Introduced)

Passer domesticus

Even the least attentive know the House Sparrow. It is rarely found away from human habitation, where it is generally considered more a nuisance than anything, especially by café clientele with its habit of taking crumbs from on top of tables as well as the ground below. (They are less of a problem at cafés than the Red-billed Gull which is larger and noisier, and able to make off with bigger portions of food.) Such is their reliance on humans, the population at Farewell Spit lighthouse, some 22km from its nearest neighbours, seems to be dependent upon the regular visits by tourists.

In the early 2000s the New Zealand population was noticeably reduced by a *Salmonella* outbreak. Numbers in the region no doubt suffered too. Numbers have since recovered, and with increased human habitation in the region, they have most likely increased.

New Zealand Pipit ~ Pīhoihoi

Anthus novaeseelandiae

One of the more under-appreciated of our birds, and confused with the Skylark by many, though it is slimmer, more elegant and has the habit of bobbing its tail. Less commonly encountered than the Skylark, it is nonetheless fairly common in open habitats from above the treeline down to the coast. It can be found in alpine areas, plantation forest clearings, along rivers, coastal scrub, rough paddocks, as well as suburban parks.



NEW ZEALAND PIPIT - PĪHOIHOI can be mistaken for the introduced Skylark; its habit of bobbing its tail is a good giveaway. PHOTO Bradley Shields

Chaffinch ~ Pahirini (Introduced)

Fringilla coelebs

The best known of the four members of the finch family that were successfully introduced into the country, principally in the 1860s, the first Nelson/Tasman releases being in 1864. It is the second-most widely distributed of the introduced species (after Eurasian Blackbird), with a correspondingly wide range of habitats from sea level to sub-alpine. Chaffinches are found in both native and non-native forestry, scrub, orchards, farmland with hedges and shelterbelts, parks and gardens. They flock in winter, often with other finches, and also maybe Yellowhammer, Cirl Bunting (where available), Skylark and House Sparrow.

European Greenfinch (Introduced)

Chloris chloris

The Greenfinch is a bird of more open areas, including farmland, edges of pine forest, orchards, gardens and parks. Like the other introduced finches, it will flock in winter. These flocks range from open paddocks

and sports fields to along seashores. In the breeding season the male, usually standing on an exposed tree branch, in addition to its song, will give off a sort of a wet whistle which it can repeat *ad infinitum*, not always endearing it to the human listener.

Common Redpoll (Introduced)

Acanthis flammea

First introduced (two birds) into New Zealand in Nelson in 1864, it is the least common of the finches in the region and the most overlooked. It is also the most taxonomically confused, with there being debate over how many sub-species formed the founding populations here and their current relationships. Suffice to say, with this confusion over the exact affinities of New Zealand's Redpolls, there is a good chance they are well on the way to forming their very own species. Although they occur in much the same habitat as do Goldfinches, they are found at higher altitudes and are less likely to be seen in urban areas.

European Goldfinch ~ Kōurarini (Introduced)

Carduelis carduelis

A delightful looking bird – not for nothing is a flock of Goldfinches known as a charm – it is a common bird of the region especially in orchards, farmlands, plantation forest edges and scrub. It is rarely encountered at higher altitudes and avoids unbroken native forest. In winter it will flock with other finches, Yellowhammer and occasionally Cirl Bunting, Skylark and House Sparrows, sometimes in flocks of a hundred or two. Open areas like Neale Park, Nelson, are a good place to see such flocks.

Yellowhammer ~ Hurukōwhai (Introduced)

Emberiza citrinella

Yellowhammers, particularly the male, with its bright yellow head and body, are a conspicuous bird of open country, especially farmland with nearby scrub. During the winter months they gather in large flocks which can attract other passerines such as all four finch species, House Sparrows



COMMON REDPOLL is the least common of the four introduced finch species in the region. PHOTO Willie Cook

and, if lucky, a sprinkling of Cirl Buntings. These flocks can be most readily seen in parks, on playing fields and other similar swards in the region, and pastures where hay/baleage have been fed out to cattle.



CIRL BUNTING The male is a handsome looking bird, though it can be overlooked amongst other small introduced passerines. PHOTO Steve Wood

Cirl Bunting (Introduced)

Emberiza cirlus

Nationally the rarest of the introduced passerines, it is uncommon in the region, occurring in a mainly coastal arc from Takaka to Cable Bay, and is very scarce inland. Most sightings are in short grass in parks, reserves, golf courses and gardens. Cirl Buntings can be overlooked in the mixed winter flocks where care must be taken to distinguish them from the very similar Yellowhammer. Less immediately striking than the Yellowhammer, it is nevertheless a handsome looking bird. The historical Nelson Haven flock is much reduced, and perhaps the most consistent long-term location is Rough Island.

The Nelson Radio Sailing Club pond on Best Island has become a reliable site too.

RARE BIRDS IN THE REGION

This list can be seen as the beginnings of a fuller archive of the rarer and more unusual birds of the region. It is by no means exhaustive. Waders are generally well reported in the region; tubenoses (albatrosses, shearwaters and petrels) are largely under-recorded. As with the species list, it follows the 2022 *Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand*.

Cape Barren Goose *Cereopsis novaehollandiae* Occasional records around Motueka are thought to be of feral birds.

Chestnut-breasted Shelduck *Tadorna tadornoides* Periodic influxes from Australia. Records pre-1990 from Pakawau, Nelson Haven and Delaware Bay. Several records from Farewell Spit, the latest being on Freeman's Pond, Triangle Flat, December 1996. A rehabilitated bird left Natureland, Nelson in February 2003.

Brown Teal ~ Pāteke *Anas chlorotis* Since 2017 more than 300 have been released into Abel Tasman National Park. The outcome of these translocations has yet to be determined. There are occasional records outside the Park, e.g. at Manuka Island, Waimea Inlet and at Wainui Inlet.

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* The first of only three New Zealand records, a single male, Farewell Spit, October 1997.

Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* A male, Maitai River, Nelson, early 2000s. A male, Kerr Bay, Lake Rotoiti, Nelson Lakes National Park, from November 2015 to at least June 2016. Both of these were escapees.

Northern Shoveler *Spatula clypeata* A single male, Nelson Wastewater Treatment Plant wetlands, June to October 2018.

Australian White-eyed Duck ~ Karakahia *Aythya australis* A single male, Nelson Wastewater Treatment Plant oxidation pond and wetlands, April 2023.

Australasian Crested Grebe ~ Pūteketeke *Podiceps cristatus* Single birds at Nelson Lakes National Park, June 1979, November 1983, September 1990 and September 1992. Formerly resident on Lakes Rotorua and Rotoiti, they had ceased to breed there sometime in the 1950s/60s. A breeding pair with young, Lake Matiri, Kahurangi National Park, November 2021. One, immature, Nelson Wastewater Treatment Plant wetlands, April 2023.

Hoary-headed Grebe ~ Taihoropī *Poliiocephalus poliocephalus* One sighting, Freeman's Pond at Pūponga Farm Park, May 1989.

Oriental Cuckoo *Cuculus optatus* One record of a single bird, Tukurua, Golden Bay, December 1984.

Pallid Cuckoo *Cacomantis pallidus* A juvenile bird, near Bainham, Golden Bay, December 2019.

White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus* 'During World War II in large numbers,' Farewell Spit. One, Farewell Spit lighthouse, December 2019. 80+, Lower Moutere, Tasman, February 2020, with sightings from the same property for the following week or so.

Corncrake *Crex crex* The only New Zealand record is from Nelson, before 1868.

Spotless Crane ~ Pūweto *Zapornia tabuensis* A notoriously secretive bird, largely confined to raupō-dominated freshwater wetlands with no proven resident population. There are records of one to two birds from such sites as Farewell Spit, Mangarakau, Awaroa, Marahou and Pearl Creek (Waimea Inlet).

Black-tailed Native-hen *Tribonyx ventralis* A long staying bird at Kiwi Park Motels & Holiday Park in Murchison, October 2022 to at least July 2023.

South Island Takahe ~ Takahē *Porphyrio hochstetteri* Translocated to Kahurangi National Park in 2018. Best seen Goulard Downs, Heaphy Track.



BLACK-TAILED NATIVE-HEN There was a long staying visitor to a Murchison motel and its chook pen between late-2022 and mid-2023. PHOTO Bradley Shields

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* The only records in the Nelson region have been at Farewell Spit with a maximum of 9 in November 1992. Formerly an almost annual visitor, it has become increasingly less common since about 2000 with only some 8 sightings of 1 or 2 birds.

Black Stilt ~ Kākī *Himantopus novaezelandiae* The occasional record including single birds at Nelson Haven, November 1977 and August 2006. Hybrid birds also seen, including one 'smudgy', Nelson Haven, September 1978, a long-term returnee (an F-hybrid) off Motueka Quay, 2000 to 2004 and an H-hybrid in Waimea Inlet, November 2023.

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* Occasional records from Farewell Spit and Motueka Sandspit. The first sighting of this species in New Zealand was at Farewell Spit, January 1961. It was regularly seen there ten to fifteen years ago, but rarely in recent years.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* Occasional records from Farewell Spit of 1 to 2 birds (the exception being the 4 seen in the first

sighting of this species in March 1974). A sighting from Motueka Sandspit in February 1990. There has been a decline in sightings in the last 10 to 15 years.

Oriental Dotterel *Charadrius veredus* One record of a single bird, Farewell Spit November 2013.

Little Whimbrel *Numenius minutus* Two records, Farewell Spit, January 1961 and March 1968.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa* A few records, mainly spring/summer, most usually in company with Bar-tailed Godwits, at Farewell Spit, Pakawau, Motueka Sandspit, Rabbit Island, Bell Island shellbank and Nelson Haven.

Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica* Records from Farewell Spit (1974, 1988, 1989, 1996 and March 2019), Waimea Inlet (1986, 1991, 1997) and Nelson Haven (1992).

Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* A handful of records of single birds from Farewell Spit. Also single birds at Motueka Sandspit, March 2020 and January 2022.

Ruff *Calidris pugnax* A single record, Nelson Haven, November 2007.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper ~ Kohutapu *Calidris acuminata* Records of up to 5 birds, Farewell Spit. Sightings and numbers decreasing in recent years. Single birds, Motueka Sandspit 1986 and Nelson Haven, October 1987 and October 2007.

Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea* Groups of birds were seen regularly at Farewell Spit (including 17 in April 1981), and occasional individuals elsewhere, including Nelson Haven and Motueka Sandspit. The East Asian-Australasian Flyway population has declined markedly and there have been very few records in the past two decades.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* Regularly recorded at Farewell Spit in small numbers since first recorded in March 1958, but much less frequent in recent years. Also, sightings at Nelson Haven, October 2004 and September 2019.

Sanderling *Calidris alba* Individuals or small groups occasionally seen at Farewell Spit, with a maximum of 6 birds in January 1983. Less commonly seen in recent years.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* Regular sightings of 1 – 3 birds, 1989 to 2000, Farewell Spit. A single bird was seen at the Bell Island Wastewater Treatment Plant in February 2007.

Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri* One Farewell Spit, October 1964, the first of only 8 New Zealand records.

Asiatic Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus* Of only 6 records in total for the country: One, Farewell Spit, January 1988 and 1, Motueka Sandspit, December 2016 to February 2017.

Japanese Snipe *Gallinago hardwickii* One record: a single bird at Taupata Point, Golden Bay, March 2004.

Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius* One, Farewell Spit, March 2005 (one of only 12 New Zealand records).

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* Single birds at Farewell Spit, November 2000 and October 2002, and Nelson Wastewater Treatment Plant wetlands, May 2018.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* A regular visitor to Farewell Spit to the mid-1990s (maximum 6 birds). Two records of single birds on Motueka Sandspit, February 2013 and March 2014, and 1, Rabbit Island, November 2023 (subsequently seen on Motueka Sandspit).

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos* One, Wairoa River, Whanganui Inlet, March to November, 1981 and 1, Mullet Creek, Farewell Spit, February 1992.

Grey-tailed Tattler *Tringa brevipes* Records from Farewell Spit, Taupata Point, Motueka Sandspit and Nelson Haven. Usually, one or two birds with a maximum of 4 (Farewell Spit, January 1967 and March 1968). What appeared to be the same bird commuted between the godwit roost on the Gobi Desert (Farewell Spit) and Taupata Point between October 2003 and May 2004.

Wandering Tattler *Tringa incana* Records from Farewell Spit in April 1965, May 1980, January 1983. 2, Motueka Sandspit, in breeding plumage, March 2003.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* Single birds at Farewell Spit, March 1974, January 1977 and January 1988.

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia* Recorded occasionally from Farewell Spit and Pūponga Inlet between November 1963 and May 1989. No apparent sightings since. Also one record for Waimea Inlet, April 1978.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* Four records of single birds on Farewell Spit (May 1989, September 1991, February 1992, January 1994). 1, Nelson Haven, November 2004.

Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum* Two singletons: Appleby, May 1959 and Farewell Spit, January 1994.

South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccormicki* Farewell Spit, January 1993.

Long-tailed Skua *Stercorarius longicaudus* One record, a single bird with Arctic Skuas, off from the Boulder Bank, Nelson, February 2017.

Black Noddy *Anous minutus* Two records of single birds – Farewell Spit, January 1961 and Tahunanui Beach, Nelson, October 1998. The latter bird was taken into care and died later the same day.



GULL-BILLED TERN displaying to a Caspian Tern/Taranui. PHOTO Willie Cook

Little Tern ~ Tara Teo *Sternula albifrons* In recent years there have been 1-2 regularly recorded in Waimea Inlet and Motueka Sandspit. Also Motupipi Estuary and Whanganui Inlet.

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* A smattering of sightings before 2010. During and since a nationwide influx in 2011 there have been regular records in the region, some of long staying birds, the majority from Motueka Sandspit, with others from Farewell Spit, Waimea Inlet and Tahuna Beach Holiday Park, Nelson. Usually singletons, but 3 seen on 3rd January 2024 at Bell Island shellbank.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* Occasional sightings, Farewell Spit, Waimea Inlet (Bell Island shellbank), Motueka Sandspit and Nelson Haven (including Nelson Wastewater Treatment Plant, with up to 5 in 2014/5). Also, single birds in breeding plumage, Motueka River bridge, Motueka in October 2015 and May 2016.

Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea* One, Farewell Spit, June 2003.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* One, Rough Island, January 2003; 1, December 2016 and 1, December 2019, Motueka Sandspit; 3, Milnthorpe, April 2022 and 2, Pakawau Beach, February 2023, 1, Boulder Bank, Nelson and 1, Pakawau, January 2024.

Crested Tern *Thalasseus bergii* A bird seen on the Ocean Beach, Farewell Spit, January 1960.

Fiordland Crested Penguin ~ Tawaki *Eudyptes pachyrhynchus* One, Cape Farewell, November 1955. Farewell Spit: 1, ashore by lighthouse September 1975; 1, Fossil Point, February 1997 and 1, near lighthouse November 1997. 1, Mutton Cove, Abel Tasman National Park and 1, Te Pukatea Bay, Abel Tasman National Park, October 2015 and possibly the same bird, Glenduan, in the same month.

Yellow-eyed Penguin ~ Hoiho *Megadyptes antipodes* One, Rabbit Island beach, May 1989 (died several days later); 1, beach wrecked, Farewell Spit, June 1994; 1, Appletree Bay, Abel Tasman National Park, November 1999.

Wandering Albatross ~ Toroa sp. Usually keeps well offshore. Farewell Spit: single bird January 1961 and 1967; a few in January/February 1993,

and 5 juveniles, November, 1993. One, beach wrecked, June 1996. 1-2 Tasman Bay, December 1985.

Antipodean Albatross ~ Toroa *Diomedea antipodensis* Three, off the Boulder Bank, November 2012.

Northern Royal Albatross ~ Toroa *Diomedea sanfordi* Usually keeps well offshore. Occasional sightings in Golden Bay and Tasman Bay.

Indian Ocean Yellow-nosed Albatross *Thalassarche carteri* Sightings in Tasman Bay of adult and juvenile birds, October 1980 to April 1981. One, offshore from Golden Bay, February 2017.

Black-browed Albatross sp. Farewell Spit: seen occasionally January/February 1993; adult and juvenile, January 1994; 1, seen from boat 25 kms offshore, August 1997.

Black-browed Albatross ~ Toroa *Thalassarche melanophris* One, Golden Bay, July 2008.

Campbell Black-browed Albatross ~ Toroa *Thalassarche impavida* Sightings off the Boulder Bank of 1-3 birds, 2006, 2009 and 2018.

Buller's Albatross ~ Toroa *Thalassarche bulleri* Farewell Spit: three offshore, May 1991 and 1, beach wrecked, June 1996; 1, out to sea, Golden Bay, 2008 and 1, pelagic survey, December 2010/January 2011.

Salvin's Albatross ~ Toroa *Thalassarche salvini* Farewell Spit, early 1993 and 2, December 1993. Off the Boulder Bank, May 2018.

Grey-backed Storm Petrel ~ Reoreo *Garrodia nereis* Two sightings, Golden Bay and Tasman Bay, during a pelagic survey, December 2010/January 2011.

White-faced Storm Petrel ~ Takahikare *Pelagodroma marina* Two, pelagic survey, December 2010/January 2011. 1, beach wreck, Farewell Spit, July 2000.

Southern Giant Petrel ~ Pāngurunguru *Macronectes giganteus* Rarely seen, generally offshore, with 1 white phase bird, Nelson Harbour, July 1984.

Antarctic Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* During major wreck on NZ beaches in October 1978 several found on both Ocean Beach and Bay Flats, Farewell Spit and a live one seen taken by a Swamp Harrier. Beach-

wrecks September 1991 and June 1994. 1, Rabbit Island and Tahunanui Beach, August 2011.

Cape Petrel *Daption capense* In the 1970s and 1980s they could be seen in their hundreds (maximum 500+) feeding about the sewage outfall pipe out from the Boulder Bank, Nelson. Common out in the bays, there are occasional sightings offshore.

Grey-faced Petrel ~ **Ōi** *Pterodroma gouldi* In the 1990 edition, noted as uncommon; status now is very rare.

White-headed Petrel *Pterodroma lessonii* One, found alive on Motueka Sandspit and taken into care, September 2023 (subsequently died).

Blue Petrel *Halobaena caerulea* In a major wreck of this species in 1981, one found dead on Farewell Spit. 1, beach wreck, Pakawau, February 1994.

Broad-billed Prion ~ **Pararā** *Pachyptila vittata* Beach wrecks, Farewell Spit, January 1961, October 1971, February 2000, July 2001 and Pakawau, 2000.

Salvin's Prion *Pachyptila salvini* Beach wrecks, Farewell Spit, July 2001, August 2002.

Antarctic Prion ~ **Totorore** *Pachyptila desolata* Beach wreck, Farewell Spit, July 2002.

Thin-billed Prion ~ **Korotangi** *Pachyptila belcheri* Beach wrecks, Farewell Spit, February 1978, August 2002 and 2003.

Short-tailed Shearwater *Ardenna tenuirostris* Beach wrecks, Farewell Spit, 1981 and January 1988.

Hutton's Shearwater ~ **Kaikōura Titi** *Puffinus huttoni* Occasional sightings. 2, beach wrecked, Boulder Bank 2003.

Little Shearwater ~ **Totorore** *Puffinus assimilis* Beach wreck, Motueka Sandspit, January 2003.

Lesser Frigatebird *Fregata ariel* A dead bird was found at Cape Farewell lighthouse in April 1901. One seen from Farewell Spit lighthouse November 1983.

Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor* An adult male was collected (killed) at Wakapuaka, summer 1861. One hit Cape Farewell lighthouse lantern, April 1891 (it was kept alive for a few days, but it refused food and died).

1, Farewell Spit near the lighthouse, February 2009 and 1, between Collingwood and Pūponga, January 2023.

Cape Gannet *Morus capensis* One record, Farewell Spit, gannet colony, December 2015 to February 2016.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster plotus* Three records of single birds in the gannet colony, Farewell Spit, January 1992, April 1996 and March 2005. 1, off Rabbit Island, May 2012.

New Zealand King Shag ~ Kawau Pāteketeke *Leucocarbo carunculatus* Vagrant from Marlborough Sounds to Adele Island, Abel Tasman National Park and Farewell Spit. Between 1st January 2015 and 6th October 2016 there were 7 records, of most likely 5 birds (2 juvenile 1st year; 1 mature; 2 in 2nd year plumage), from Adele Island, Tonga Island and Tokongawa Island. King Shag usually travel no further than 25 kms from their colonies – these sightings were all about 60 kms from the nearest colony. In December 2020 a group of 19 was recorded roosting on a rock stack near the Whangamoa Estuary – the first record in the Nelson City area. One of these birds had been banded as a chick on North Trio Island, Marlborough.

Pacific Heron *Ardea pacifica* One record (out of a dozen New Zealand sightings), 88 Valley Road, Wakefield, May 2014.

Plumed Egret *Ardea intermedia* One record, a single bird, base of Motueka Sandspit, March 2004.

Nankeen Night Heron ~ Umu Kōtuku *Nycticorax caledonicus* One record, Collingwood 1983 (a banded bird from a release of this species from Wellington Zoo in 1982).

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* Prior to the 1990 edition, up to 6 seen in Farewell Spit to Pakawau area, March 1976 to April 1981. Other sightings at Nelson (1966 and 1972) and Waimea Inlet (1977 and 1979). Post-1990: single birds at Waimea West, 1992; Cotterell Road, Appleby, May 2009; Cape Farewell, December 2016; Rakopi, Whanganui Inlet, June 2023 and Redwood Road, Appleby, July 2023. This species currently breeds in Blenheim and local records are thought to be birds dispersing from there.

White Ibis *Threskiornis molucca* First New Zealand record, Appleby, Nelson, 1925.

Dollarbird *Eurystomus orientalis* One, near lighthouse, Farewell Spit, 1956 (found dead the next day) One, Whanganui Inlet, March 1983 and 1, Tukurua, Golden Bay, October 1996.

Laughing Kookaburra *Dacelo novaeguineae* Two Farewell Spit records: 1, seen by lighthouse keepers, 1959 and 1, cross-over road at base of the Spit, October 1996.

Nankeen Kestrel *Falco cenchroides* One, near the lighthouse, Farewell Spit, April 1998. 1, Korere, autumn 1990, was later killed by a car.

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo *Cacatua galerita* A flock of 5, Farewell Spit, late 1940s and 1 was seen occasionally at Triangle Flat, Farewell Spit in the 1980s.

Eastern Rosella ~ Kākā Uhi Whero *Platycercus eximius* One, seen at the lighthouse, Farewell Spit, 1997 (probably from a flock released in Golden Bay that year that didn't establish).

South Island Kokako ~ Kokako Kōkā *Callaeas cinereus* Various tantalising reports from Kahurangi National Park, but no confirmed records.

South Island Saddleback ~ Tieke *Philesturnus carunculatus* Two translocations, one to Adele Island, Abel Tasman National Park in September 2014 and the other to the Brook Waimārama Sanctuary in April 2021 – both, unfortunately, unsuccessful.

Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina novaehollandiae* First New Zealand record, Motueka, c.1869. The only other regional records are of two dead birds: 1 young male on Rabbit Island, June 1904 and 1, Motueka in 2023.

Satin Flycatcher *Myiagra cyanoleuca* One found dead, Motueka, December 1988. (There has only been one live record for New Zealand.)

Rook *Corvus frugilegus* Widespread but occasional sightings over the years, with records at Farewell Spit, Tukurua and Onekaka, Golden Bay, Waimea Inlet, Nelson Haven, and more recent records at Nelson (2021) and Stoke (2023). Usually singles, but up to 3 seen. This species is an 'unwanted organism' under the *Tasman Nelson Regional Pest Management Plan 2019*.

Fairy Martin *Petrochelidon ariel* One record, near base of Farewell Spit (Triangle Flat), November 1982 (second New Zealand record).

Tree Martin *Petrochelidon nigricans* Many early claimed records are fraught with uncertainty due to potential confusion with Welcome Swallow. The earliest confirmed record in the region was from Taupata, Golden Bay, 16 March 1856. Walter Buller was told of flocks of 2-3 dozen, Farewell Spit, 1892, but identity is uncertain. 2, Farewell Spit, January 1960; 1, Nelson Haven, November 1981 and November 1982. At Farewell Spit: 1, January 1988; 1-2, December 1990-January 1991 and December 1991-January 1992. 1, Nelson Haven, November 1983. 1, Torrent Bay, December 1999; 1, Farewell Spit lighthouse, December 2019 and 1, Aniseed Valley, October 2022.



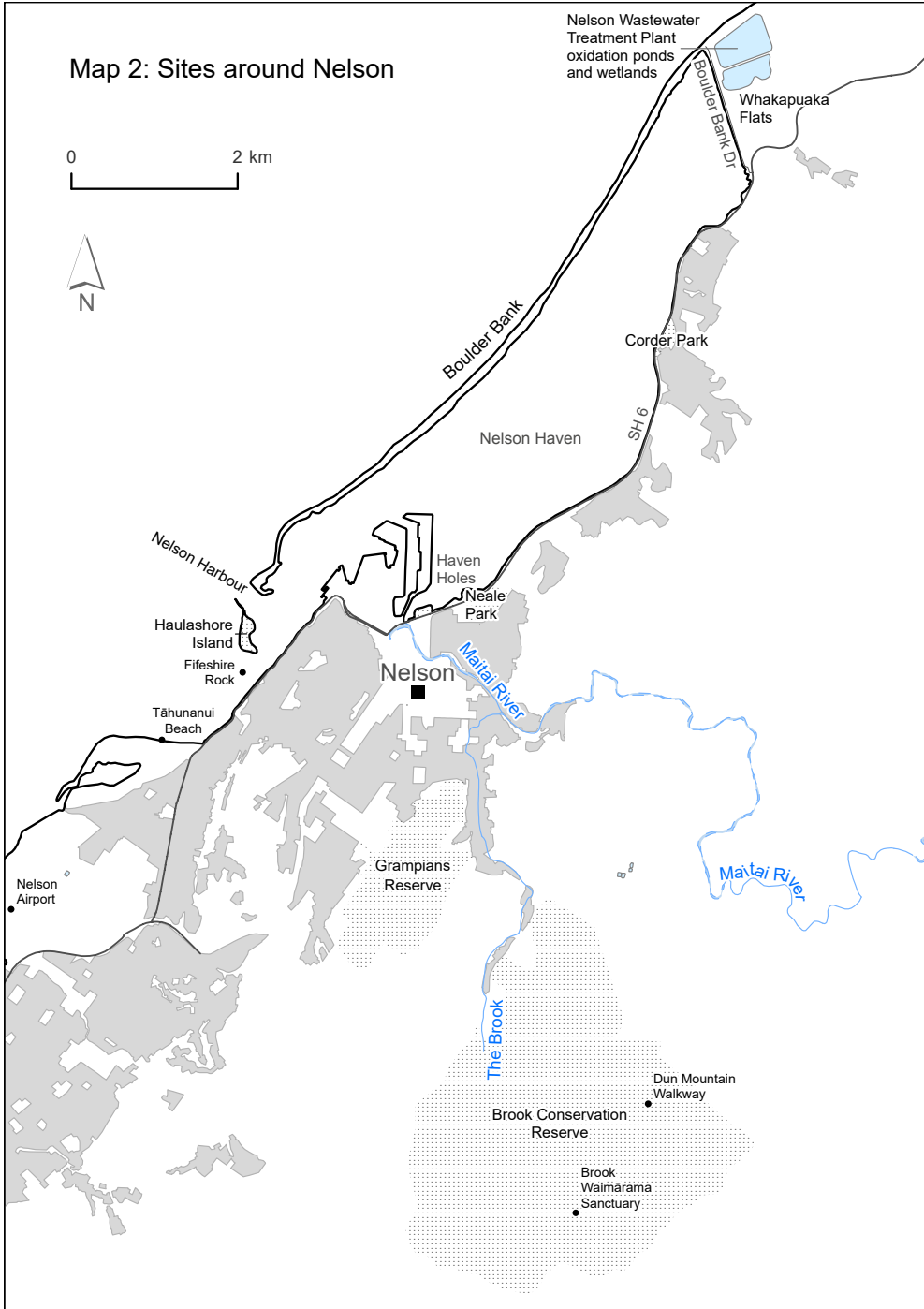
WRYBILL - NGUTU PARE Most records are from Motueka Sandspit and Waimea Inlet, with occasional sightings on Farewell Spit. They are becoming almost as rare as hen's teeth at Nelson Haven. PHOTO Willie Cook

KEY SITES FOR WATCHING BIRDS IN THE REGION

Maps are included for four areas. The others are well covered by parks, reserves and walkway maps and leaflets available from the Department of Conservation, local tourist information offices and the internet. Rural roads are prone to being affected by adverse weather; all alerts as to access to conservation lands can be found on the DOC website.

Nelson Haven and Boulder Bank (Map 2, page 76)

The Haven is a tidal estuary at the northern entrance to Nelson. The Boulder Bank runs parallel to the main road (State Highway 6) and separates the Haven from Tasman Bay. The best views of birds on the Haven are from Boulder Bank Drive. This links the main road to the Boulder Bank and the Nelson Wastewater Treatment Plant oxidation ponds and wetlands at the north end of the Haven. Bar-tailed Godwit, South Island Pied Oystercatcher and Pied Stilt are pushed up in high tide roosts at both ends of the Drive. The high tide level is important, particularly for the godwits, with the birds affording the closest views on 3.7m to 4.0m high tides. Tides over 4.0m have the godwits generally leaving the Haven to roost at Waimea Inlet. Other birds in this area of the mudflats are Variable Oystercatcher, the three gull species, White-fronted and Black-fronted Tern, White-faced Heron, and, on out-going tides, flocks of Banded Dotterel. It is worth keeping an eye out for rarer waders amongst the godwit roost (averaging about 850 birds in summer, as it has for at



least the last 50 years), with Whimbrel, Wrybill, Red Knot or Turnstone occasionally making an appearance.

The Nelson Wastewater Treatment Plant oxidation ponds hold such species as Mallard, Grey Teal, Australasian Shoveler, New Zealand Scaup, Paradise Shelduck, Pied Shag and Black Swan. In 2009 an artificial wetland was created as part of the treatment plant with two ponds being constructed next to the oxidation ponds. With these, there has been a dramatic increase in numbers of New Zealand Scaup (for which the site is of international importance), as well as for shoveler and teal. An impressive array of rarities has also been recorded including New Zealand Dabchick, White-winged Black Tern, Northern Shoveler, Red-necked Phalarope, Australasian Little Grebe, Australasian Crested Grebe and Australian White-eyed Duck (Hardhead). Since May 2023, the whole of the Nelson Wastewater Treatment Plant has been fenced and access is restricted. The oxidation ponds can still be viewed from the road through the netting fence.

Access to the Boulder Bank can be made from the seaward end of the Drive. The bank is not easy walking, being composed of loose stones. Nearly 100 pairs of Variable Oystercatcher nest along the Boulder Bank, making this probably the most important nesting site for the species globally. Southern Black-backed and Red-billed Gull, together with White-fronted Tern nest in colonies of varying size near to the lighthouse at the southern end of the bank. Banded Dotterel used to nest on the first few hundred metres south of Boulder Bank Drive, but increased foot traffic (human and canine) has more or less put a finish to this. Offshore flocks of Fluttering Shearwater may be seen at any time of the year.

The Whakapuaka sandflats adjacent to Boulder Bank Drive support a good population of Fernbird. The swards of glasswort *Sarcocornia quinqueflora* attract flocks of finches and buntings in winter, including a few Cirl Bunting.

At the Nelson end of the Haven, opposite Neale Park, is Haven Holes. On high tides this holds a 'secondary roost' of Pied Stilts, with Variable Oystercatchers and South Island Pied Oystercatchers. The playing

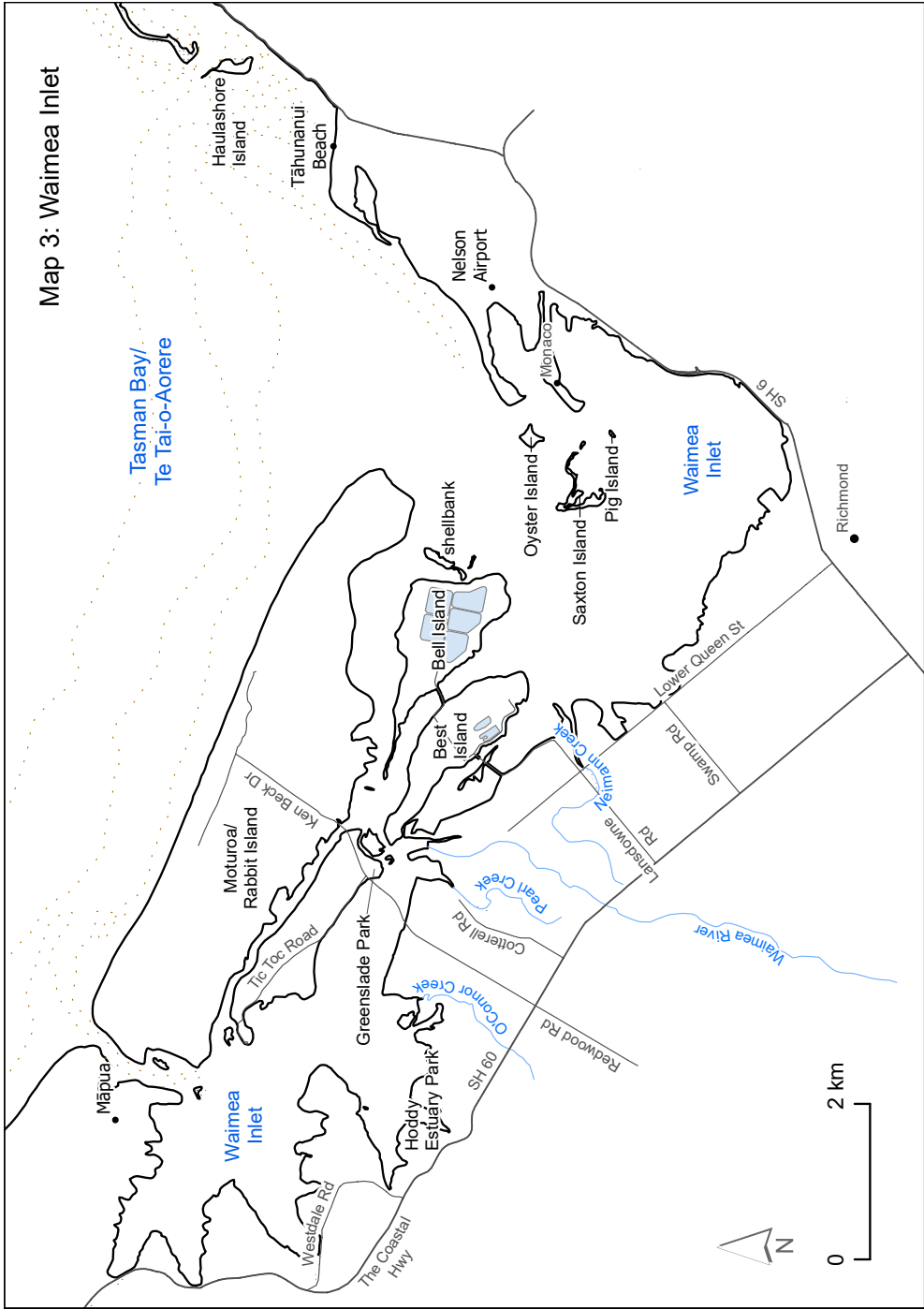
fields of Neale Park can host over 100 feeding Variable Oystercatchers alongside lesser numbers of South Island Pied Oystercatcher during and after wet weather.

Waimea Inlet (Map 3, page 79)

This is the largest estuary in the region but one of the more difficult in which to see birds due to access constraints. The two best high-tide roosts are at Bell Island shellbank and Rabbit Island. Bell Island shellbank has restricted land access. On spring tides when the shellbank is more or less under water, the roost often relocates to the eastern end of Rabbit Island, a 4km walk along the front beach to access. This roost is used during summer by godwit, knot, South Island Pied Oystercatcher, Variable Oystercatcher, Turnstone, maybe a Whimbrel and, on passage, Wrybill. However, the location of roosts within the estuary vary depending on erosion and deposition; recent storm damage and scattered debris can make sites unusable at times.

The best place to access the estuary is at Rough Island, immediately adjacent to Rabbit Island. Banded Rail can still be seen on either side of the causeway prior to the bridge. Turn left after the bridge on to Tic Toc Road, the first 200 m runs alongside the estuary. About mid-tide is best and can give a wide variety of birds including all four species of black-footed shag, the three species of gull and three of tern, godwit, South Island Pied Oystercatcher, Variable Oystercatcher, Pied Stilt, Royal Spoonbill, White-faced Heron and the occasional sighting of Banded Dotterel. In winter White Heron can be seen and, with luck, Little Egret. The annual summer sightings of Pacific Golden Plover appear to have dried up.

Just past the Tic Toc Road turn-off is Greenslade Park. A Pied Shag colony is making its way south in the pines at the water's edge. Nesting goes on throughout the year, and the colony also attracts Little Shag, and visiting Little Black Shag and Royal Spoonbill. Small flocks of passerines feed in the short grass, with Cirl Buntings often amongst them.



Along the beach front at Rabbit Island South Island Pied Oystercatcher and Variable Oystercatcher can frequently be seen feeding on tuatua, and gannets and Fluttering Shearwater may pass offshore.

Australasian Bittern, Marsh Crake, Fernbird and Banded Rail are all associated with the remnant wetlands of the estuary. The Pearl Creek stopbank and tide gate at the end Cotterell Road, Appleby has been a rewarding spot to see all of these species. They are all in decline, due to habitat loss and predation. But hopefully, the long-term predator trapping and habitat enhancement in the area will help see them stage a comeback. The paddocks across from the creek have long been one of the more likely places to see Cattle Egret in the region. There is always an abundance of Pukeko feeding in these fields.

The pond at Hoddy Estuary Park is a fairly reliable site for the Australian Wood Duck, as well as one of only two known recent breeding sites in the region for Australasian Coot. It also contains what looks to be the beginnings of a small colony of Little Shags.

Moutere Inlet, Motueka and Motueka Sandspit (Map 4, page 82)

Moutere Inlet

The coastal highway (State Highway 60) from Nelson to Motueka runs alongside the Moutere Inlet, a large tidal area where godwit, oystercatchers and stilt can be seen both feeding and (on lower high tides) roosting. Parking is difficult. Out of their breeding season a White Heron can almost be guaranteed either on the mudflats or in one of the embayments on the western side of the road. The Easton Loop pond (the only freshwater embayment) is a dependable site for New Zealand Scaup.

Motueka

A regular Royal Spoonbill roost, sometimes with attendant White Heron, can be seen off Wharf Road, on the southern outskirts of Motueka (though again not the best place to park a vehicle). Dog-leg around the factory complex at the end of Wharf Road to George Quay and on the breakwater



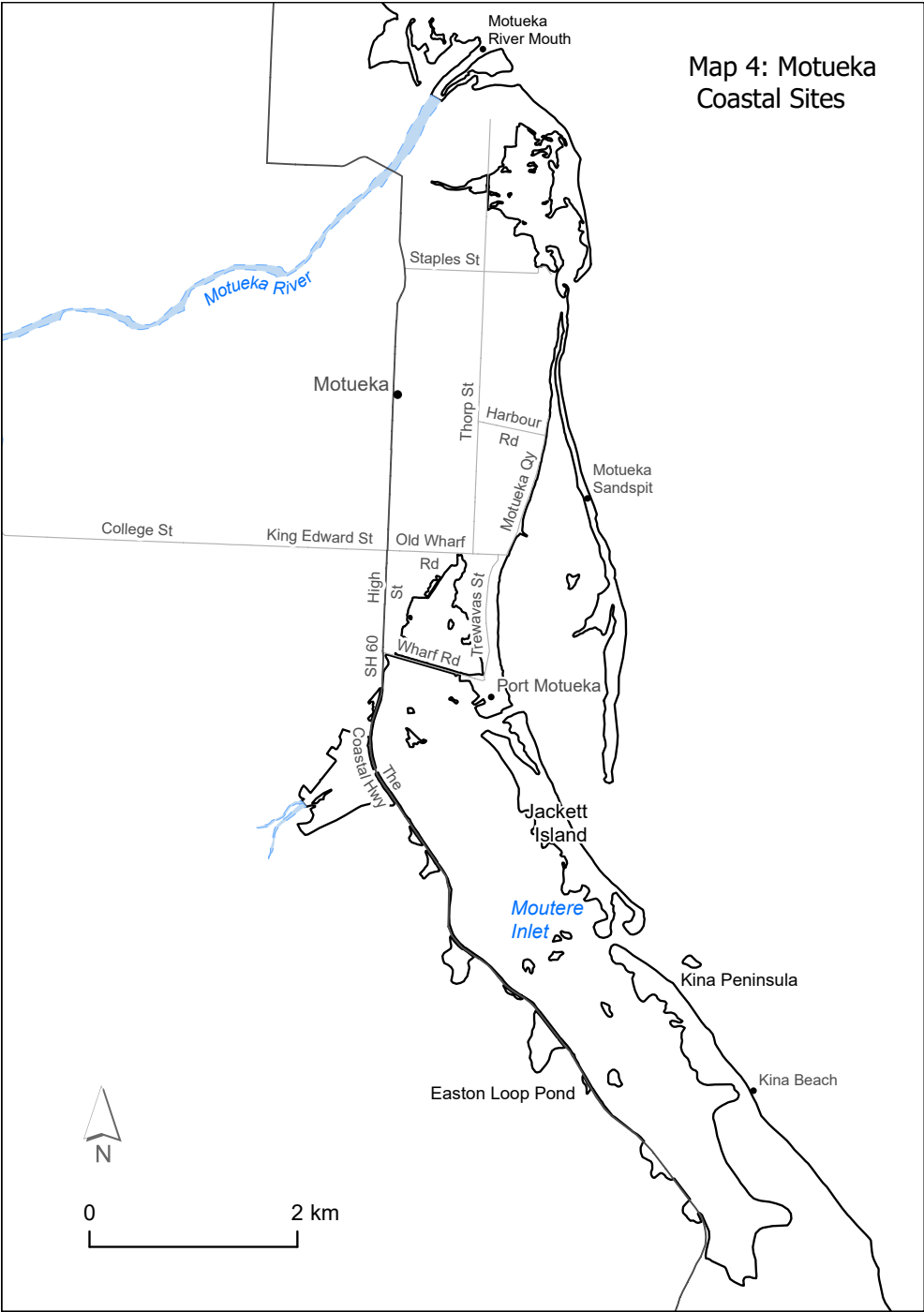
BAR-TAILED GODWIT - KUAKA and RUDDY TURNSTONE at high tide
roost on Motueka Sandspit. PHOTO Paul Griffiths

there can be representatives of all of the black-footed shags as well as the yellow-footed Spotted Shag.

The stretch of Motueka Quay from about the wreck of the Janie Seddon to the golf course is, outside of hightide, good for feeding godwit, knot, oystercatchers, stilt, Wrybill and Turnstone. It is about the best place in the region to see White-faced Heron and, in winter, kingfisher up close. The paddocks off Thorp Street and Staples Street, when wet, are feeding grounds for hundreds of South Island Pied Oystercatcher, plus godwit, Variable Oystercatcher and Banded Dotterel. They always abound in Pukeko.

Motueka Sandspit

Motueka Sandspit, accessed from Staples Street at its northern end, is at its best at high tide when it has the largest and most varied wader roost in Tasman Bay. In summer godwits, knots and Turnstones predominate with birds from Nelson Haven and Waimea Inlet joining the roost on king tides. In spring and summer Variable Oystercatcher and Banded Dotterel nest along the spit. In some years White-fronted Tern and Black-billed and Red-billed Gull also nest at its southern end. In winter there are good numbers of South Island Pied Oystercatcher, Variable Oystercatcher (most roosting at the southern tip, some 5 km from the carpark) and Banded Dotterel. Wrybill can be seen on passage to and from their breeding grounds and some may over-winter.



It is also a good site for rarities recording, amongst others, Gull-billed Tern, Black-tailed Godwit, Asian Dowitcher, both Grey-tailed and Wandering Tattler, New Zealand Dotterel and the occasional Little Tern.

Golden Bay Coastline (Map 5, page 84)

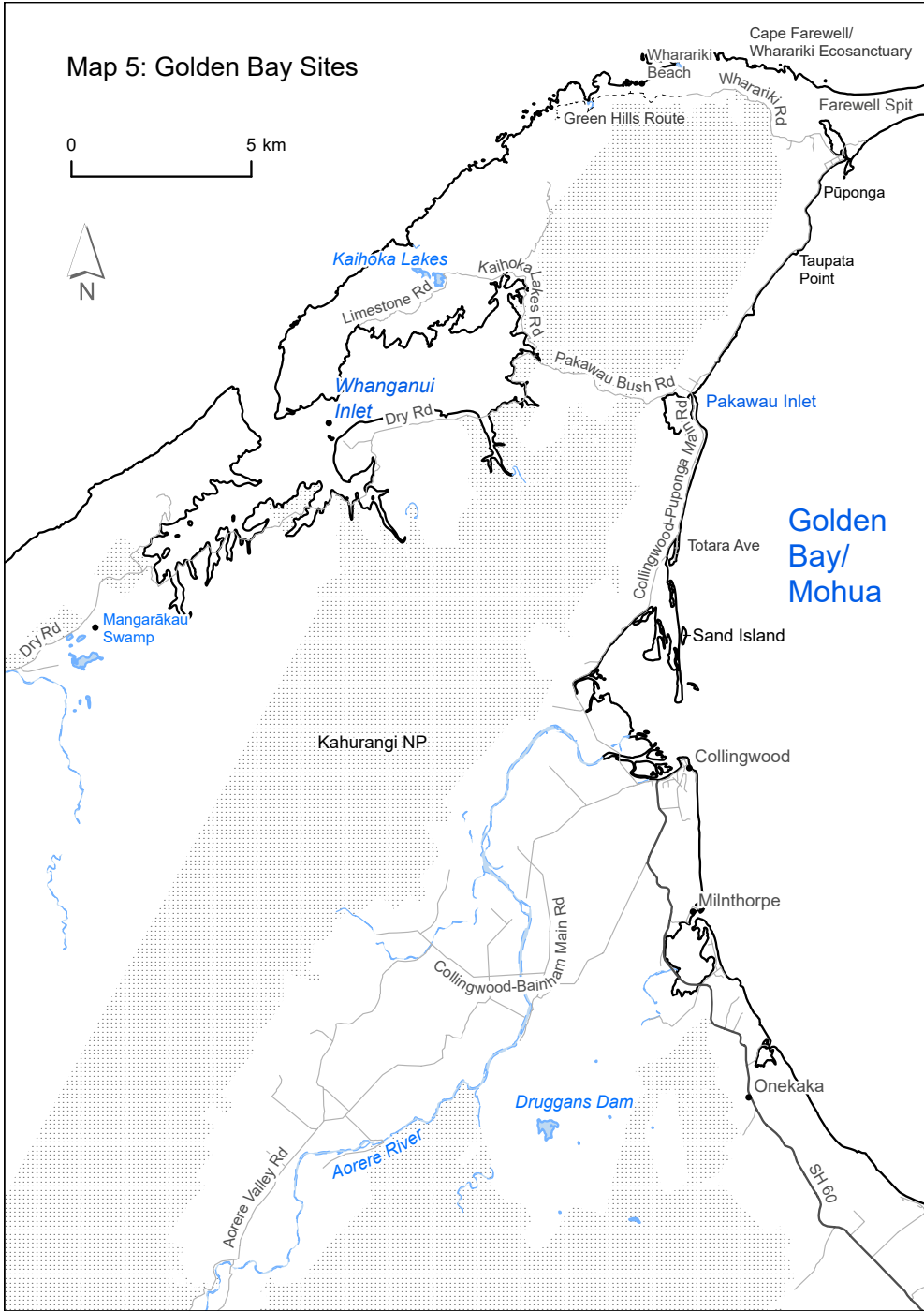
This coastline has many small estuaries which generally do not contain the variety of birds seen on the larger ones. There are wader roosts at Collingwood and the offshore Sand Island, Pakawau and Taupata Point, though on king tides the birds fly to Farewell Spit. The Pakawau roost is approachable with care, and the Taupata Point roost (which has a small observation hide), though small, usually has a good diversity of species, as well as some notable rarities – the only Japanese Snipe recorded in the region, for example. The coastline from Totara Avenue to Pūponga is a good one for White Herons, and both owl species may be seen in the headlights at night.

Farewell Spit and Pūponga Farm Park (Map 5, page 84)

Farewell Spit

Farewell Spit is one of only seven Ramsar sites (“Wetlands of International Importance”) in New Zealand and is a Nature Reserve - as such access is restricted. The Ornithological Society/Birds New Zealand makes thrice yearly wader counts on the Spit, and Farewell Spit Eco Tours in Collingwood run trips to the lighthouse near the end of the Spit. These trips are very interesting but are not designed for birdwatching as such, as they are made at low tide. Between September and April they have tours which incorporate a visit to the Gannet colony, and Wader Watch Tours at the base of the Spit.

There is public access at the base of the Spit, with either one of two circuit walks the best way to see the birds in this area. Leave the car park at about two to three hours before high tide (preferably on a spring tide) and walk over to the Ocean Beach across the farm park. Walk up the Spit to the end of the public access (4 kms). Cross the Spit here to the Bay





AUSTRALASIAN GANNET - TĀKAPU colony on Farewell Spit. It is the only sea level colony in the country. PHOTO Willie Cook

Flats and then head back down the Inner Beach. Alternatively, walk up the Inner Beach to the 4WD Spit Track, cross the Spit to the Ocean Beach, where continue as above.

On the Ocean Beach side, in the excellently named Gobi Desert, a high tide roost of oystercatchers, godwit and knot gather, and a few Turnstones may be seen feeding along the tideline. The pairs of Variable Oystercatcher along this stretch of the beach will let you know you are infringing on their territories. If your timing is such, on the walk back down the Inner Beach looking over the Bay Flats, you will see birds from the roost flying in onto the exposed sandflats, and for a short while there are good views of them from the beach. The tide soon recedes – and with it the birds – and when it does, it goes out a long way, though the sandflat is hard enough if you were of a wish to follow.

For the rarity hunter, the pans behind both beaches, when flooded, have been known to host such as Sanderling, New Zealand Dotterel, Red-necked Stint and Curlew Sandpiper.

Pūponga Farm Park

Pūponga Farm Park extends from the Triangle Flat area at the base of Farewell Spit, and includes the Pūponga Hilltop Track - from the visitor centre car park at Pūponga to Wharariki Beach passing by Pillar Point



AUSTRALASIAN BITTERN - MATUKU-HŪREPO Mangarakau Swamp is the stronghold in the region of this rarely seen 'nationally critical' bird. PHOTO Bradley Shields

and Cape Farewell Lighthouse - and the Green Hills route. Triangle Flat has some excellent birdwatching, particularly at high tide when waders often roost in the paddocks. These are mainly oystercatchers and Banded Dotterel, with the odd rarity like Glossy Ibis, Lesser and Greater Sand Plovers thrown in. It is also a good time to see Black Swan in close to shore on the Inner Beach side. Canada Goose is also (unfortunately) regular on the Flat, regardless of the tide.

The stretch of the Pūponga Hilltop Track either side of Cape Farewell, is perhaps the best place for seawatching in the region. White-capped Albatross, Westland Petrel, Buller's Shearwater, Sooty and Fluttering Shearwater can be seen at the right time of the year. Cape Farewell is the location for the Wharariki Ecosanctuary, to where the latter species has been translocated. This track is also a good one for – very cautious – sightings of Variable Oystercatcher pairs on the rocks below, and for the tantalising possibility of seeing a Reef Heron.

The Green Hills route includes Dune Lake which is the only proven site for Australasian Little Grebe breeding in the region.

Whanganui Inlet (Map 5, page 84)

Also known as Westhaven Inlet, it is the only west coast estuary in the region and is one of the least modified in the country. Most of the northern side is bordered by private land; the Dry Road (accessed from Pakawau) takes you along its southern side. Probably the best way to explore the inlet is by kayak.

It is an important site for waders, with godwit, South Island Pied Oystercatcher, Variable Oystercatcher, and Banded Dotterel. It is the only site on the west coast of the South Island for Banded Rail. Its marshy fringes, such as at Rakopi, are one of the better places for Fernbirds in the region and occasionally host an Australasian Bittern.

Mangarakau Swamp (Map 5, page 84)

It is the largest remaining wetland in the region, covering about 350 hectares. Australasian Bittern are the star attraction, this being far and away the best place to hear and see them in the region. Other wetland birds seen here are Marsh Crake, Spotless Crake and Fernbird. Tomtit and Brown Creeper also use the swamp. Pipits can be seen in the open shrubland, and Grey Warbler, Kereru, Tui, Bellbird and more recently, South Island Robin have moved in from the nearby mature forest. The area is managed by the Friends of Mangarakau Inc. and a lodge is available for visitors.

Nelson Lakes National Park

Both of the park's two major lakes, Rotoiti and Rotoroa, are relatively poor in bird species and numbers. Black Swan and New Zealand Scaup breed on both lakes in small numbers. The more publicly accessible lakeside areas are rather thin on native birdlife – with the honourable exception of Bellbird, Silvereye and Fantail – it is not until you range further, particularly at Lake Rotoiti, that the rewards of years of dedicated pest control and

species management by Friends of Rotoiti can be better appreciated. Among the forest birds to encounter are South Island Robin, Tomtit, Brown Creeper, Kaka and Yellow-crowned Parakeet, with the possibility of Kea calling while flying overhead. A walk up Mount Robert also provides good opportunities to see these same native species.

The Braeburn Walk to the northern end of Lake Rotoroa enters an area of tall, diverse native forest that contains parakeets and other more common native species.

The upper river valleys of the park, particularly those more rarely visited, such as the Matakītaki, may provide a chance to see Blue Duck, as does Blue Lake at the head of the Sabine Valley. Great Spotted Kiwi have been released at Lake Rotoiti and are breeding. They have been heard from the village of St Arnaud.

Kahurangi National Park

Flora Saddle – Mount Arthur

Less than two hours from Nelson, the Flora Saddle provides good opportunities for birdwatching in a montane beech forest habitat. The drive leads up the Graham Valley, a tributary of the Motueka River, to the car park which is a popular starting point for tramping trips to Mount Arthur and the Tablelands. The final stretch up to the car park is narrow, steep and prone to corrugations and slips - prior to travel, it is worth checking on the DOC website the status of the road, especially in winter. The carpark is a good spot to see many of the small native species, such as Tomtit, South Island Robin, Brown Creeper and Rifleman. These birds can usually be found in the bush edge. Kea are no longer regular winter visitors to the car park. A bush-lined track leads up to the Flora Saddle, and from there you may choose to climb to the bushline, or follow an easy grade down the track above the Flora Stream to the Flora Hut. Either trip gives you a very good chance of seeing those smaller bush birds as well as the possibility of seeing or hearing Yellow-crowned Parakeets. Extensive trapping since 2001 by Friends of Flora and occasional aerial 1080 have aided recovery of birdlife in this area.

Reduced to one male in the Flora catchment by 2000, Blue Duck have made a heartening comeback. This is thanks to a successful reintroduction project initiated by Friends of Flora. Blue Duck are now plentiful in Deep Creek and in the Upper Takaka River. Great Spotted Kiwi, another translocated species, can be heard in some of the less travelled parts of the Flora catchment.

Heaphy Track

The Heaphy Track provides a four to six day walk through a variety of habitats from coastal rainforest to mountain tussockland. Access to the Nelson end of the track is at the end of the Aorere Valley Road, Golden Bay, and it finishes on the West Coast at Kohaihai, 15 kms north of Karamea. Most of the region's forest birds can be found, including Kaka, Yellow-crowned Parakeet, Tomtit, South Island Robin and Weka, and there are Blue Duck along the streams. Great Spotted Kiwi are present along most of the route, but are most numerous in the open tussock country of the Goulard Downs. At night their calls join those of Morepork and Weka. Goulard Downs is also the place to see South Island Takahe, successfully introduced there in 2018.

Abel Tasman National Park - Coast Track

This exceedingly popular track around the picturesque Abel Tasman National Park coastline provides the opportunity to see a wide range of coastal and estuarine birds, as well as, since various translocations, some of our rarer bush birds. The saltmarsh at Marahau at the start of the southern end of the track holds Fernbird and Banded Rail and despite all the foot traffic the sighting of the latter is almost a given as is that of its cousin, the Weka. Rocky shores support Variable Oystercatcher and the more solitary Reef Heron, and the estuaries are popular with South Island Pied Oystercatcher and occasionally other waders. Caspian and White-fronted Terns and Red-billed Gull patrol close to the shore, and gannets and Fluttering Shearwater pass by further out to sea. Weka also frequent many of the camping areas along the track, and the bush holds a range of the more common forest birds.



WEKA on the causeway at the Marahau end of the Abel Tasman National Park. PHOTO Charmaine Field

Project Janszoon was established in 2012, with intensive stoat control, occasional aerial 1080 and some translocations to enhance birdlife. Awaroa has become a good place to see Brown Teal and Bark Bay for South Island Kaka. South Island Saddleback and South Island Robin have been introduced to Adele Island - it is only the latter that have thrived. While the more vulnerable forest birds such as South Island Robin, South Island Tomtit, Yellow-crowned Parakeet and Brown Creeper survive better at higher altitudes in the park, predator control has meant they are becoming more common nearer to the coast.

Dun Mountain Walkway

This walkway begins in the Brook Valley behind Nelson and, after an initial steep climb, it takes a gentle grade on a well-formed track (shared with mountain bikes) through scrub habitats into beech forest. It's best to put aside a full day for this. The walkway follows the track of the historic Dun Mountain Railway, the country's first railway, and passes through the Dun Mountain Mineral Belt.

Many introduced species such as finches and California Quail can be observed during the early stages of the walk, and there are excellent views from these open areas, both across Waimea Inlet and inland across the Richmond Ranges. The beech forest is also relatively open and provides good viewing conditions. South Island Robin and Tomtit are common, together with Bellbird, Tui and New Zealand Pigeon. Small groups of Rifleman are a noticeable feature in the summer and Brown Creeper may be seen, though their flocking behaviour makes this a matter of chance. Falcon, Kaka and Yellow-crowned Parakeet have also been recorded from this track.

The Brook Waimārama Sanctuary

Situated at the end of Nelson's Brook Street, the Brook Waimārama Sanctuary is a 690 hectare sanctuary fully enclosed with 14.4 kms of predator-proof fencing. Browsing, grazing and predatory mammals have been removed, except for mice. It has a variety of tracks ranging from the wheelchair-accessible The Loop to the 4-to-5 hour Carter's Track. There is an entrance fee, the size of which is dependent on a number of factors, the major one being whether you are a Nelson/Tasman resident or not.

There has been noticeable regeneration of the bush and a most heartening return of bird song to what had become an ornithological dead zone. Bellbird abound in the lower reaches of the sanctuary, as do Tui. New Zealand Pigeon can be spotted throughout. Silvereye, Fantail and Grey Warbler are also common. South Island Robin and Tomtit are found higher up. There have been translocations of the Orange-fronted Parakeet into the upper reaches of the sanctuary, with birds breeding successfully. The sanctuary currently holds about a third of the world's population of this highly endangered parakeet. A translocation of South Island Saddleback was less successful.

MARKED BIRDS

Ornithologists both in New Zealand and overseas mark birds with a variety of metal and plastic bands and flags. These often allow individual identification and sightings of marked birds make a very valuable contribution to our understanding of bird ecology and hence contribute to conservation management. Marking projects in the Nelson/Tasman region include studies of Caspian Tern, Variable and South Island Pied Oystercatchers and Fernbirds. It is always worth scanning flocks of Arctic-



VARIABLE OYSTERCATCHER - TŌREA PANGO marked as a chick at Marahau. PHOTO Craig Martin

breeding shore birds as we regularly see birds marked in Russia, China and Australia. If you see a marked bird please report it to the Department of Conservation's Banding Office. This can be done using their on-line reporting form: <https://app.birdbanding.doc.govt.nz/sightings>



NEW ZEALAND DOTTEREL - TŪTURIWHATU This is a Southern New Zealand Dotterel, banded on Stewart Island/Rakiura and subsequently seen at Motueka Sandspit and Rabbit Island/Moturoa. **PHOTO** Craig Martin

APPENDIX

FAILED INTRODUCTIONS

The Nelson Acclimatisation Society undertook many introductions between 1863 and 1919; the majority of them failed to establish. More recently, attempts have been made to introduce 'game birds' by Fish and Game New Zealand and, apparently, private individuals, none of which has resulted in self-sustaining populations. They include:

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca*

Eurasian Teal *Anas crecca*

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

Mountain Quail *Oreortyx pictus*

Northern Bobwhite Quail *Colinus virginianus*

Stubble Quail *Coturnix pectoralis*

Brown Quail *Synoicus ypsilophorus*

Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus*

Silver Pheasant *Lophura nycthemera*

Red-legged Partridge *Alectoris rufa*

Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*

European Turtle-dove *Streptopelia turtur*

Island Collared Dove *Streptopelia bitorquata*

Common Bronzewing *Phaps chalcoptera*

Barbary Dove *Streptopelia risorii*

Wonga Pigeon *Leucosarcia melanoleuca*

Java Sparrow *Lonchura oryzivora*

Australian Chestnut-breasted Munia *Lonchura castaneothorax*

Diamond Firetail *Stagonopleura guttata*

Common Myna *Acridotheres tristis*

Eurasian Robin *Erithacus rubecula*

Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*

Twite *Linaria flavirostris*

Common Linnet *Linaria cannabina*



MANDARIN DUCK Never formally introduced into the wild in the region, every once in a while one will make an escape and grace our waterways. PHOTO Willie Cook

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A BIRDWATCHER'S CODE OF CONDUCT

- The welfare of birds must always come first.
- Do not damage habitat.
- Keep disturbance to a minimum.
- Do not disturb birds at the nest.
- Do not harass rare or uncommon migrants.
- Restrict the use of 'pishing' and playback.
- Respect the rights of landowners, local residents and non-birdwatchers.
- Respect the rights of other birdwatchers.
- Respond positively to questions from interested passers-by.



ROYAL SPOONBILL – KŌTUKU NGUTUPAPA Birds atop a pine at Greenslade Park, Rough Island – surely this will be the next new breeding bird in the region... PHOTO Willie Cook