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Otago Region Newsletter 10/2024

October 2024



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

Ornithological Snippets

The long-staying **Mute Swan/Wāna** at Lake Waihola was reported from the south end of the lake on 30 September. There were scattered reports of **Shining Cuckoo/Pipīwharau** from the end of September.

A **Marsh Crane/Kotoreke** was seen at Sinclair Wetlands on 1 October, with 2 at Moke Lake on the 12 seen and photographed.

2 **Wrybill/Ngutu pare** were at Aramoana on 21 September, while 3 at Catlins River Estuary in late September included one that had been banded as a chick at Makarora last year. Martine Darrou reports that 48 **Bar-tailed Godwits/Kuaka** returned to Karitane Estuary on 21 September. A Red Knot was seen with the godwits at Pounaweia on 28 September.

The first **Sooty Shearwater/Tītī** of the season at St Clair prion fence nesting boxes was recorded on 26 September. **Little Black Shags/Kawau tūī** were reported from Pounaweia on 28 September, and Glenorchy the following day.

A **NZ Falcon/Kārearea** was being mobbed by Black-backed Gulls in Lower Stuart Street in Dunedin on 26 September. 2 **Kea** were reported from near Luggate on 5 October, and 2 **Kākā** were present in a garden near Tapanui from at least 23 to 26 September; the previously mentioned bird in Weston near Oamaru was seen on a further 2 occasions in late September.

Finally larger than usual numbers of **Welcome Swallow/Warou** were observed feeding over Lake Hayes in late September.

Please send any interesting reports to cluthaphotos@gmail.com

Richard Schofield

eBird News

The 2024 eBird Taxonomic Update is currently under way. During the process, species names may appear in unexpected ways, other records may temporarily become subspecies groups, and your species totals may jump around. Please, **don't adjust your data** if you notice this!

It is recommended that all checklists in the app are submitted as soon as possible, and by 21 October at the latest, so that the latest changes can be implemented.

Further information can be found at <https://ebird.org/region/NZ/post/2024-taxonomy-update>

eBird Big Day 12 October

Otago was a little way off the pace this time, with 66 species from 61 checklists. This put us in sixth place in terms of species, but fourth as regards number of checklists. Again, Otago produced the only **Yellowhead/Mohua** worldwide, and a welcome addition to the list was **Marsh Crake/Kotoreke** at Moke Lake.

Richard 027 281 8701 or cluthaphotos@gmail.com

Matuku Muster

The Bittern Conservation Trust (BCT) are carrying out a national survey of Australasian Bittern/Matuku-hūrepo (Matuku Muster) this spring, with counts around 19 October and 16 November. If you are interested in taking part, either contact the BCT at bitternconservationnz@gmail.com, or let me know and I can supply further information.

Richard 027 281 8701 or cluthaphotos@gmail.com

BirdsNZ Otago Branch News

CANCELLED Field trip to Takitakitoa Wetland Monday 28 October (Labour Day)

Health & Safety



BirdsNZ Council have asked for Regional newsletters to include a standing request to report on Health & Safety issues.

A reminder to members that when involved with organised BirdsNZ Field Trips and activities, that we should not hesitate to call 111 to respond to medical events or incidents that result in harm.

If anyone has been involved in or is aware of an incident that resulted in harm to any of our activity participants, please contact the Regional Representative, so that the President and EO can be notified immediately

Plan ahead, stay safe while birding everyone.

Dawn: birds.otago@birdsNZ.org.nz 027 442 7348

Podcasts by two of our local Birds NZ members



While many of New Zealand's native wetland birds are in decline, one relative newcomer has been thriving...Join birders as they head out for a Nationwide Spoonbill Census to find out how the quirky birds are doing.

<https://www.karthicss.com/podcast/episode/38c20708/counting-spoonbills-will-the-trend-continue>

Karthic also has podcasts including bitterns, fairy prions and robins. In his latest one, he interviews Franny about the titi at Sandy Mount.



Explore the thinking behind nature-led regeneration

Episode #2 includes riflemen

Episode #3 includes red-billed gulls

<https://accessmedia.nz/ProgrammePage.aspx?PID=7e48175f-25a3-4c9e-80dd-ea808ff0f369>

SO MANY WAYS TO HELP OUR BIRDS



Birds New Zealand's Bird Atlas Project is recording bird populations and distribution around the country to inform evidence-based conservation and management.

www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/join-now/

JOIN US NOW



Notes from the Regional Representative

This month our bittern team have been and are busy still putting Acoustic Recording Devices (ARDs) out at various sites across Otago.

Dawn has deployed 24 ARDs in wetlands around Lake Whakatipu and in the Matukituki River catchment, Franny Cunningham and Catriona Gower are also deploying them into the Catlins areas and Mary Thompson is organising to put ARDs out in Coastal Otago and the Maniototo with volunteers there. Unfortunately, some of our sites have been impacted by flooding. Happily though, Wendy Ambury from Love Bittern will be visiting volunteers in the Catlins and Maniototo in November. The Matuku Muster is on this weekend but with our busy spring schedule, we're looking ahead to next year to support this activity more broadly. If anyone wants to get out and listen for bittern, wetlands with raupo, shallow margins and a good fishery should be your target!

Wendy has also shared some wonderful resources to help improve bittern habitat and respond to protect them when we find them. Get in touch with Dawn if you'd like these.

Early results confirm we have bittern in the Waihola/ Sinclair wetlands which is wonderful news.

2026 BirdsNZ Conference

The Conference Committee have selected the Lake Wanaka Centre as our venue for the 2026 BirdsNZ Conference on the King's Birthday weekend. Auckland will be the host location for the 2025 Conference, and we look forward to that event ahead of our turn to host our national conference in Wanaka.

Birding around Moke Lake



Moke Lake

Another successful day of birding was enjoyed on Saturday the 12 of October with Dawn leading a group of 8 mostly returning birders for the Whakatipu Wildlife Trust around Moke Lake. This outing coincided with the October Big Day Birding event so we were able to make a great contribution to the tally for Otago. We found two marsh crake which was a wonderful treat for everyone.





CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF BIRDS

The ethical conduct of people undertaking photography of birds in New Zealand has periodically been a topic of conversation amongst members of *Birds New Zealand*. In terms of photographer behaviour there is a strong parallel with the long-established convention applied to bird studies that the interests of birds shall always prevail over the interests of a person, or groups of people, undertaking research. Here we lay out a set of ethical standards to guide members when photographing birds.

The aim has been to keep these principles simple, to limit the code to the topic of photography, and to ensure consistency with the Nature Code of Conduct of the Photographic Society of New Zealand. Some features of this draft Code of Conduct have been adopted from the BirdLife Australia Ethical Birding Guidelines, the American Birding Association Code of Birding Ethics and The Birdwatchers Guide (from various British birdwatching societies).

This target audience of this Code of Good Conduct for the Photography of Birds is the membership of Birds New Zealand. It is expected that members of the Society will accept and apply the provisions of this Code. It is hoped that non-members will also find these guidelines of use, and follow them as best practice for their wildlife photography.

Aim: The aim of this Code of Conduct is (a) to increase awareness of potential negative impacts that photography (the capture of images via still or moving camera, mobile device, drone, trail camera, or other) may have on birds, and (b) to ensure respect for the security and welfare of birds and to minimise interference to birds and to the surrounding environment during observation and photography. The Council of Birds New Zealand is committed to acting with integrity and expects high standards of behaviour from its members in respect to observation and photography of birds.

1. Security and welfare of birds

- A. The security and welfare of a bird, or birds, when being observed or photographed shall always take precedence over the interests of the observer.
- B. With specified exceptions native bird species are legally protected throughout New Zealand regardless of whether they occur in national parks, on reserves, on private land, on any other tenure, or on the sea. The provisions of the Wildlife Act 1953 must be respected; schedules of the names of birds that are not protected or are partially protected are specified in the Act (ref: http://www.nzlii.org/nz/legis/consol_act/wa195393/).
- C. Local or national legislation and/or guidelines concerning birds being observed or photographed must be accepted and be followed.

2. Minimise stress to birds

- A. It is essential to minimise stress to birds and not expose them to danger when approaching. There should be minimal disturbance to the surroundings, or preferably none at all. Exercise restraint and caution during observation and photography of birds.

- B. It is important that a photographer acquire reasonable knowledge of the bird and its habitat before attempting to capture images. Take time to observe the habits of the bird and to understand and evaluate the risks associated with potential disturbance.
- C. It is not the purpose of this Code of Conduct to prescribe specific minimum distances from birds as these can vary greatly depending on species and the habitats in which birds live. Nevertheless, we encourage photographers to maximise distance and minimise the length of time spent in close proximity when taking photographs. Monitor the behaviour of both the subject and other wildlife in the area during photography and move away immediately if a change in behaviour is observed.
- D. Minimise the use of artificial light such as flash sparingly for photography, especially for close-ups, or use none at all. Be mindful when using artificial lights in the vicinity of birds, as this disrupts the ability of nocturnal species to see. Use of red light over white light is always preferable around nocturnal birds. Minimise the length of time during which artificial lights are used around birds, maximise the distance at which these are used, and minimise the power of any such lighting.
- E. Do not use spotlights to increase visibility of birds for photography. Never use laser light devices in the vicinity of birds.
- F. Photographers should take extra care to maintain a reasonable distance and minimise disturbance when photographing nesting or roosting birds to avoid causing disturbance to adults and chicks. Disturbance may cause nest desertion, or might attract predators to a nesting or roosting site. Do not modify the habitat (e.g., removing leaves/branches) to obtain a better image.
- G. Trail cameras in the vicinity of nesting birds or at any other site should only be deployed if this activity is unlikely to cause stress to birds or lead to nest abandonment. Regularly monitor bird behaviour when trail cameras are deployed and remove the equipment immediately if a change in behaviour of birds in the vicinity is observed, or if it is suspected that desertion of a site might occur.
- H. Do not deliberately flush or disturb birds in order to get a good view of the underwing or any other part of the bird not usually seen. Do not modify a nest site or its surroundings to force a bird into a more photogenic position. Do not physically manipulate birds to force a bird into a more photogenic position.
- I. Do not handle birds or eggs unless engaged in recognised research activities where touching birds or their eggs is both necessary and (for protected species) authorised under appropriate Wildlife Act authority and animal ethics permits.

3. Attracting birds to a specific site

- A. Play-back of calls (audio calling mechanisms), feeding attractants, or any other means of attracting birds to a site for photography, research or for recreational bird watching are generally discouraged. Audio calling should never be used when birds are breeding. These practices may increase territorial disputes and/or aggressive behaviour by birds, and may affect mate choice or nesting behaviour in some species.

4. Use of bird photography on social media

- A. If posting photos or videos showing direct interactions with birds as part of research, conservation, or animal welfare activities on social media must include captions that specify that Wildlife Act Authority and/or animal ethics permits were obtained to undertake such activities that involve handling wild animals. The use of detailed captions indicates to the audience that trained individuals interacting with wildlife are doing so in an ethical and safe way.

- B. Only post images of birds in their natural habitat while they are free to move around and at a safe distance from the photographer.
- C. Do not post images that facilitate the identification of sensitive and/or protected areas (e.g., breeding areas). Ensure that geospatial data (i.e., GPS locations) are removed from photographs of images of endangered birds where these data are considered sensitive. Mobile devices often automatically capture geospatial data (i.e., geotags) when capturing images, and we encourage photographers to be mindful of this when posting images to social media.

5. Use of drone aircraft for photography

- A. The Society does not recommend the use drone aircraft for any purposes in the vicinity of birds, nesting colonies or roosting areas without appropriate animal ethics permits and/or Wildlife Act authority.
- B. Drone aircraft MUST keep well back from birds, especially at nesting sites, roosts, display areas and important feeding sites. Hovering of drone aircraft near birds and their nesting sites should be kept to a minimum.
- C. Any *Birds New Zealand*-funded studies requiring intrusive methods to facilitate photography, and specifically the use of drones near colonies, roosts or nest sites, require prior support by the Scientific Committee of *Birds New Zealand*.
- D. Photographers and operators of drone aircraft planning photography on land administered by the Department of Conservation and Territorial Land Authorities have an obligation to ensure that their proposals conform to agencies' policies and local legislation, and that appropriate permission is obtained.

6. Permission to enter land

- A. Permission should always be requested from private and Māori landholders for bird observations and bird photography before entering onto their land. Do not trespass onto land. Stay on roads and paths on private land where they exist, unless the landowner gives permission to move to specific sites on the private land.
- B. Secure appropriate permits when observing birds in restricted areas, irrespective of land tenure.
- C. Always follow the laws, rules and regulations governing public land and the protection of wildlife.

7. Respect the interests of others when observing and photographing birds

- A. Practice common courtesy in contacts with other people who are observing and photographing wildlife. Considerate behaviour will generate goodwill amongst birdwatchers and the wider community.
- B. Always respect the interests, rights and knowledge of others watching birds, especially inside and near observation hides.
- C. Do not approach birds either for observation or for photography to the point where they are disturbed if the same bird, or flock of birds, is being observed by others.
- D. Follow and promote this Code of Conduct and encourage others to do the same. Lead by good example to others.

Quarantine Island/Kamautaurua Kōanga /Spring bird counts



Kia ora koutou fellow QI/KT bird counters & friends,

I hope you are keeping well.

I'm starting to plan for the Quarantine Island/Kamautaurua Kōanga /Spring bird counts.

For those of you who don't know, over the past 6 or so years we have carried out fortnightly 5-minute bird counts on the island's 9 bird count sites during Spring (October-December) and Autumn (May-July) on either a Saturday or Sunday or a weekday. Derek Onley and Francesca Cunninghame and others helped me set up these counts which I now lead.

The main purpose of the counts is to engage others in the enjoyment of watching and listening to birds, and observing any changes from year to year. The counts are also (eventually) uploaded to *New Zealand Bird Atlas/e-Bird*. **If anyone is keen to help me with this let me know.**

It usually takes about 2 hours to do all 9 bird count sites around the island.

We do a 5-minute count at each site, starting around 10am, depending upon boat transfers.

I will make a call the day before, as the counts are weather dependent, and we won't go if it's raining or very windy. I will make an alternative date if the weather isn't favourable. I book the boat transfers (\$20pp return, or there may be a possible subsidy of \$10pp return). The boat leaves from Back Beach in Port Chalmers with a possible Portobello pontoon pick up by arrangement. Let me know if you could assist in car pooling or need a ride to Port Chalmers. We usually spend the whole day on the island leaving around 3.30pm, or there can be an early afternoon return boat option leaving the island at around 1pm, subject to availability.

Possible dates (weather & boat transfer dependent)

Saturday 19th or Sunday 20th October

Saturday 2nd or Sunday 3rd November

Saturday 16th or Sunday 17th November

Saturday 30th November or Sunday 1st December

If you think you might be interested in joining in, please let me know, and let me know your contact phone number.

Kā mihi nui, nā Claire Hagglund (Secretary)
Email: secretary.quarantineisland@gmail.com

Peter Schweigman Memorial Royal Spoonbill Colony and Nest Count 2024



Photo Credit: Nick Beckwith

Survey Plans

We are fortunate that we have a very kind offer from Chris Lalas to include photographing spoonbill colonies during his fly-over of the Otago coast for his annual surveys of red-billed gull colonies. This is hugely appreciated. We will try to do some ground proofing for accessible colonies: Taiaroa from the Monarch, Maukiekie from Moeraki side, and we will hold a weekend field trip to survey the Nugget's colony and previous colony locations at False Islet and Rainbow Isle.

Weekend Field Trip to Nugget Point and Catlins: 7 and 8 December 2024.

Plan to be involved. A volunteer to be the chief organiser would be appreciated.

Overnight Saturday 7 December at DOC house on Nugget Point. First in, first accepted for DOC house; 6 beds plus some mattresses: contact Dawn dawnap11@gmail.com
Or book own accommodation at local B&B/motel.

Day trip: Sunday 8 December to Nugget Point for end-of-year potluck picnic lunch at noon with everyone. For those unable to join for whole weekend, please plan to come for the day.

Suggested plan

Saturday 7

Head down to Tautuku and check out Rainbow Islet; then back via False Islets at Cannibal Bay where there was a colony 10 years ago (apparently not active recently). Another team is to head to Waikawa Harbour to check out a possible colony. Return to Nugget Point for accommodation and check the colony there. Any spare time we could try for crakes with playback.

Sunday 8

Spend morning looking at colony and whatever else takes our fancy (seabird watching) and meet with day trippers at noon for an end-of-year pot-luck lunch (at DOC house area). Head home via any possible wetland/swamp areas to check for crakes eg Tuakitoto.

Programme 2024

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

Birds NZ Otago Monthly Meeting Zoom Link:

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83922655184?
pwd=QapM32iZ0YWPrKuNYdCKPWwaYS36eg.1](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83922655184?pwd=QapM32iZ0YWPrKuNYdCKPWwaYS36eg.1)

Meeting ID: 839 2265 5184

Passcode: 633186

Oct Tuesday 22 Te Arawhetu Waipoua GPS tracking Kuaka / Whenua Hou diving petrel

Nov Tuesday 26 William Perry Annual Quiz Night

Dec Sat & Sun 7 & 8

Weekend Field trip to Nugget Point and beyond. Spoonbill nesting colonies and crake surveys. More information in this newsletter.

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

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

Contributions for the next newsletter should reach the editor by **19 November** sodlin@gmail.com

Disclaimer

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