

# **BIRDS NEW ZEALAND**

*Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa*

No.45 March 2025



The Magazine of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand





❑ Tara Iti “rarer than Kākāpō”: Darren Markin/NZ Birds Online.

## NZ Fairy Tern ‘cautious optimism’

The Department of Conservation (DOC) is “cautiously optimistic” about the 2024/2025 Tara Iti NZ Fairy Tern breeding season. On 4 February, DOC reported 10 Tara Iti chicks had fledged in the wild and eight more chicks had been successfully hand-raised at Auckland Zoo. With fewer than 40 of the critically endangered birds remaining, every nest, egg, and chick is vital to the survival of the species. That means Tara Iti are six times rarer than Kākāpō.

DOC Ranger Nikki Hartley said, “we’re pleased with how the season is progressing, but there’s still a long way to go.” Auckland Zoo’s Richard Gibson told RNZ zoo staff were providing expert husbandry support to help bring New Zealand’s rarest breeding bird back from the brink. “When a species has declined to such a precarious low, intensive management techniques like incubation, hand-rearing and head-starting are critical to helping to significantly increase productivity - and hopefully turn the tide of decline to see Tara Iti flourish once again.” DOC staff attributed this breeding season’s progress to a combination of management techniques and collaborative conservation efforts; chick-rearing techniques; research initiatives; and habitat protection at nest sites.

## Kārearea bouncing back in the capital

At least eight pairs of Kārearea New Zealand Falcons have successfully raised chicks around the capital this summer. Sightings with photos of juveniles have been reported at Zealandia Ecosanctuary, Karori cemetery, Ōtari-Wilton’s Bush, Kelburn, Brooklyn, Kandallah Park, Centennial Park and Beacon Hill (Miramar Peninsula). Kārearea are so frequently seen in the capital in city parks and the surrounding suburbs that photos of them are posted to social media almost daily, sometimes with prey such as a feral pigeon or a small introduced songbird.

Despite their incredible high speed hunting capabilities, Kārearea are classified as At Risk due to predation and habitat loss. So, their increasing profile in the capital highlights the success of local conservation efforts across the city by Wellington City Council, Zealandia, mana whenua, Predator Free Wellington, Capital Kiwi Project, Te Motu Kairangi - Miramar Ecological Restoration, and hundreds of dedicated volunteers.

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||||||| NO.45 MARCH 2025 |||||

4. *From the President’s Desk*
5. *2025 NZ Bird Conference & AGM*
6. *Colin Miskelly awarded the Cranwell Medal*
7. *Workshop renews interest in moult studies*
8. *Results of a new albatross diet study*
9. *Natalie Forsdick and Ian McLean*
10. *New Banded Dotterel tracking study*
12. *A Solomon Islands birding adventure*
16. *Bird News*
19. *Regional Roundup*
23. *Reviews*

### COVER IMAGE

Juvenile Kārearea New Zealand Falcon, Ōtari-Wilton’s Bush.

Photo by Michael Szabo.

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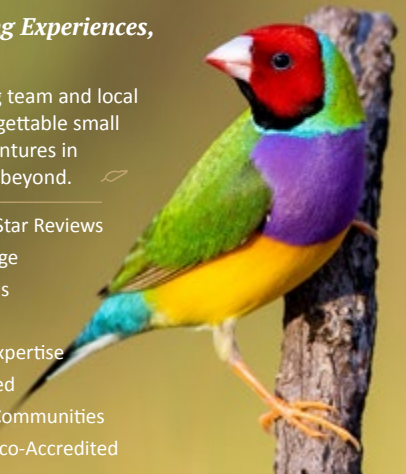
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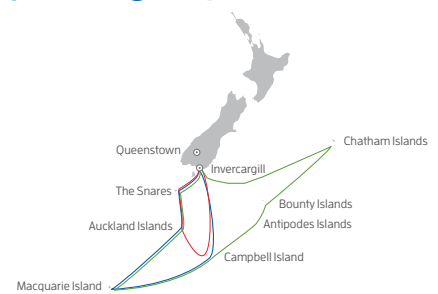
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# From the President's Desk

## Summer activities

After a busy summer, we are back into the swing of regional meetings and activities. My personal birding highlights over the summer were simple: daily bird walks with family north of Christchurch over the festive break, time spent watching Kōurarini European Goldfinches in the garden, and several occasions observing Tarapirohe Black-fronted Terns feeding along the river. A visit to the Tākapu Australasian Gannets at Muriwai following my return to Auckland left me amazed and delighted by the number of tourists visiting the colony. As work picked up again, I fell short of my goal to submit an eBird checklist every day in January, but 42 checklists submitted for the month felt like a good effort.

I had the pleasure of attending both the Birds New Zealand Auckland annual summer picnic held at the 'Ark in the Park' in the Waitakere Ranges, and the South Auckland annual summer barbecue kindly hosted by past President David Lawrie. These events provided a great chance to connect with members in an informal setting.

## Council meeting

Our final Birds New Zealand Council meeting of 2024 was held on Saturday 30 November, where finances and sponsorship were key topics, alongside activities of the regions. With the bulk of annual subscriptions due over the holiday period, we anticipate starting 2025 in a good financial position. You can support us by checking that your membership is up to date. It's easy and quick to renew now online here: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/join-now/>

We are actively seeking a new sponsor for the Birds New Zealand Research Fund. This well-established fund supports important ornithological research, and we encourage you to get in touch either to suggest potential sponsors, or to request our sponsorship prospectus.

I wish to acknowledge the inconsistency in publication of our scientific journal *Notornis* in 2024, and reassure authors and readers of a return to 'business as usual' in 2025 thanks to the leadership of Dr Colin Miskelly who has taken on the role of Editor.

## Membership survey

In November 2024, I developed a survey of members to help the Birds New Zealand Council understand what services and opportunities members most appreciate. We were also seeking to understand where members would benefit from additional efforts to improve their experience as part of the Society. We received 308 responses, and I spent several days analysing the data and reading all of your thoughtful comments. At our next Council meeting in March, we will discuss the results and make an action plan to address the challenges and opportunities identified from your responses.

## Upcoming events

Registration is now open for our annual New Zealand Birds Conference (<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/nz-bird-conference-2025/>) to be held in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland this King's Birthday Weekend (31 May – 2 June). Abstract submissions close at the end of March, so don't miss out if you wish to present research. Other events of interest to members include the Oceania Seabirds Symposium (<https://oceaniaseabirds2025.com/>) which will also be held in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland in April, and the Australasian Ornithological Conference (AOC) (<https://birdlife.org.au/events/australasian-ornithological-conference-2025/>) in Perth, Australia in November. We will be offering travel grants to support students to attend the AOC, so look out for more details in the coming months.

## Developing ornithological skills

One common comment among survey responses was that there were relatively few opportunities provided for members to develop their ornithological skills. We had a first opportunity to address this with our inaugural online workshop in February: An Introduction to Moulting in Birds. It was fantastic to see the high level of engagement from around 90 attendees tuning in from around the country and even a few overseas. This workshop, organised by David Melville and Dr Paul Fisher, was supported by 10 presenters from universities, Te Papa Atawhai the Department of Conservation, and other organisations, who were happy to share their knowledge. For an overview of the topics covered, see page 7. Resources from the workshop will be made available through the Society's website.

Our second Birds New Zealand Youth Camp of 2024 was held at Pūkoro Miranda Shorebird Centre in December thanks to the efforts of South Auckland members. These Youth Camps provide an opportunity for young people to learn from experienced members of the Society. This Youth Camp had a focus on the challenging business of wader identification, including interactive seminars on morphological features, census counts, and monitoring tools, interspersed with time in the field to consolidate the new knowledge. I visited for the first afternoon of introductory lectures and an outing to the bird hides, and was blown away by the enthusiasm of the students. The future of birding looks bright!

NATALIE FORSDICK, PRESIDENT



## Global marine flyways identified

A new study has been published in *Global Ecology and Biogeography* (Joanne M. Morten *et al.* 16 February 2025) identifying global marine flyways for long-distance migrating seabirds from tracking data. A global team of researchers, including from New Zealand, set out to identify the broad-scale global oceanic migration routes or flyways used by multiple pelagic, long-distance migratory seabirds based on a global compilation of tracking data (1989–2023) for seabirds.

They collated a comprehensive global tracking dataset that included the migratory routes of 48 pelagic and long-distance migrating seabird species across the Atlantic, Indian, Pacific and Southern Oceans. They grouped individuals that followed similar routes, independent of species or timings of migration, using a dynamic time warping clustering approach. They visualised the routes of each cluster using a line density analysis and used knowledge of seabird spatial ecology to combine the clusters to identify the broad-scale flyways followed by most pelagic migratory seabirds tracked to-date at an ocean-basin scale.

Their study identified six marine flyways across the world's oceans: the Atlantic Ocean Flyway, North Indian Ocean Flyway, East Indian Ocean Flyway, West Pacific Ocean Flyway, Pacific Ocean Flyway and Southern Ocean Flyway. Generally, the flyways were used bi-directionally, and individuals either followed sections of a flyway, a complete flyway, or their movements linked two or more flyways. Transhemispheric figure-of-eight routes in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, and a circumnavigation flyway in the Southern Ocean correspond with major wind-driven ocean currents. The marine flyways identified demonstrate that pelagic seabirds have similar and repeatable migration routes across ocean-basin scales. The study also provides a framework for international cooperation. See: <https://doi.org/10.1111/geb.70004>



## 2025 NZ Bird Conference & Birds New Zealand AGM

The 2025 NZ Bird Conference & Annual General Meeting will be held in Auckland on King's Birthday weekend (31 May-2 June) at the Novotel & IBIS Auckland Ellerslie Hotel. Abstracts must be submitted by 31 March. See <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/nz-bird-conference-2025/> for details, or contact your regional representative. Professor Dianne Brunton (University of Auckland) and Matt Maitland (Senior Ranger Open Sanctuaries, Auckland Council) will be the plenary speakers. Her subject is "Highlights from 35 years of researching birdsong, behaviour, and conservation in New Zealand." His is a "20 year retrospective of Tāwharanui Open Sanctuary".

### 30 May 2025 (Friday)

18:00 - 19:00 Registration at Novotel & IBIS Auckland Ellerslie Hotel

### 31 May 2025 (Saturday) at Novotel & IBIS Auckland Ellerslie Hotel

08:00 - 09:00 Registration. Tea/coffee available

09:00 - 09:30 Opening

09:30 - 17:00 Scientific Day One

19:00 Informal Dinner

### 1 June 2025 (Sunday) at Novotel & IBIS Auckland Ellerslie Hotel

08:00 - 09:00 Registration. Tea/coffee available

09:00 - 15:00 Scientific Day Two

15:30 AGM and Awards

19:00 Conference Dinner

### 2 June 2025 (Monday) Field trip options

Tiritiri Matangi Island; Tāwharanui Regional Park; Behind the Scenes at the Museum - bird collection; Ambury Regional Park; Pelagic trip to Mokohinau Islands.

There will also be the usual photo competition at the conference.

## Call for Nominations for Regional Representatives 2026

Each Regional Representative serves for a one-year term, starting 1st January, although incumbents can be re-nominated for an unlimited number of terms. Nominations for each region close with the Secretary (74 Leckhampton Court, Dunedin 9011 or [secretary@birdsnz.org.nz](mailto:secretary@birdsnz.org.nz)) on 31st July 2025. The nomination paper for each RR must be signed by two financial members of the Society from that region and must be consented to in writing by the person nominated, who must also be a financial member of the Society. If the Secretary receives more than one valid nomination from a given region, a postal ballot will be held among the financial members of that region. If no nomination is received from a region, Council may appoint an RR for the 2026 year. As per the Constitution, where practicable each Region shall hold an annual meeting before 31st March where an annual report of the Region's activities and a financial statement for the previous year are presented to the members. Johannes Chambon, Secretary, 74 Leckhampton Court, Dunedin 9011, [secretary@birdsnz.org.nz](mailto:secretary@birdsnz.org.nz)

## Check out our regional newsletters online!

Most of our branches produce a regular regional newsletter which they send to local members via email and post to our website. The most recent editions are here: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/resources/regional-newsletters/>. The older editions are archived here: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/resources/pre-2017-newsletters/>

## 2025 Membership Renewals

Annual memberships are renewable on the anniversary of your joining date. Birds New Zealand depends on your subscription, so we ask that you please pay promptly. You can renew your membership online via our website, either by a direct credit payment or a credit card payment: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/login/#myaccount>

Please also notify the Membership Secretary if your email address has changed since your last renewal: [membership@birdsnz.org.nz](mailto:membership@birdsnz.org.nz)

## Make a difference with a donation

Birds New Zealand is working to ensure a better future for our birds, but we also need your help. We are a registered charity (CC 41020) so tax credits are available for donations made in New Zealand in the following two ways:

\* Deposit a donation into our bank account: 02-0290-0164715-00

\* Make a donation by online credit card payment: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/donate/make-a-donation/#/form/Donation>

## Leaving a gift in your will

No matter how much it is, leaving a gift in your will really does make a difference. All funds gifted to Birds New Zealand go to Birds New Zealand's Projects Assistance Fund, so you can be confident your gift will have a real impact for birds. We suggest you consult your solicitor, Guardian Trust, or Public Trust office for advice on drawing up your will. These are the two ways that you can support Birds New Zealand with a gift in your will:

\* *Specific Legacy:* Leaving a specific amount of money, bonds, shares, items, or a nominated gift to Birds New Zealand, or

\* *Residual Legacy:* Leaving a gift of all or part of your net estate (what remains after all taxes, specific gifts to family and friends, and the cost of administering the estate have been paid). This type of legacy should be expressed as a percentage or share of your estate. If you would like to discuss either of these options, please contact our Executive Officer Ingrid Hutzler:

[eo@birdsnz.org.nz](mailto:eo@birdsnz.org.nz)

## New Members

We warmly welcome the following new members: Guy Portass, Sahar Firoozkoochi, Victoria King, Heather Arthur, Anna Sephton, Beth Chapman, Jimi Webb, Jo Charman, Amanda Choy, Dan Mulvagh, Margaret Bruce (Auckland); Bud Chapman, Gregor Tims, Matilda Moran, Kylie Spurway, James Richard Stokes, Sarah Little (Canterbury); Ryan Zach Bauckham (Far North); Lorena Smith, Beryl Wilkes (Nelson); Kate Bonne, Takla Gardey (Otago); Mags Ramsey, Natasha Bansal (South Auckland); Sadie Shields (Taranaki); Ethan Morgan, Bogdan R. McLachlan (Waikato); Megan Bramwell, Ann Hayman, Danielle Shanahan, Keegan Fraser, Delia Small, Kim Price Moor, Allister Jenks, Michaela Kelly (Wellington); Christopher Stamp (France).

## Donations

We wish to thank the following for their generosity:

Peter Howden, Anthony Carey, C. John Ralph, Philip Munns, Catherine Oakley, Alan Baker, Stefan Marks, Ian McLean, Thalia Sachtleben, Barry Hartley, Joy Sagar, Paul Cuming, David Pye, Mikayla Kendle, Graham Barwell, Janet Vaughan, Kerry Oates, Graham I. Hunt, Heather Smithers, Kevin A. Parker, Bruce McKinlay, Brenda Pinfold, Geoff de Lisle, Lois Wagener, Marti Eller, Noel Ward, Kay Milton, Christina Troup, Anita Spencer, Timothy Short, Rob Schuckard, John Flux, William Perry, Bernard Card, Mary McEwen, Gwyneth Armitage, Anna Santure, Annette Cunningham, Christopher Stamp, Keith Woodley, Sioux Plowman, Jo Charman, John Troost, Lyn Reid, Susan Heron.

## Dr Colin Miskelly awarded the Cranwell Medal

Dr Colin Miskelly was awarded the Cranwell Medal for “excellence in communicating science to the general public in any area of science or technology” by the New Zealand Association of Scientists (NZAS) in December 2024. The medal is among the most prestigious medals awarded across all fields of research in New Zealand. Colin is the curator of vertebrates at Te Papa and a Council member of Birds New Zealand, and has been instrumental in advancing the understanding of New Zealand’s unique bird species.



▣ Colin Miskelly on Mt Crawford: Gordon Miskelly.

In their citation, the NZAS said, “Colin...is one of Aotearoa’s leading and most passionate ornithologists, specialising in bird conservation and the history of science. He has a strong record of public engagement across a range of platforms and has given numerous interviews to the national and international media. He has written over 200 Te Papa science blog posts, contributed to several museum exhibitions and edited several popular books. Perhaps his most significant science communication project to date was his development of ‘New Zealand Birds Online – the digital encyclopaedia of New Zealand Birds’. This website went live in 2013 and is the definitive guide to New Zealand birds, with a webpage for every living, extinct, fossil, vagrant and introduced bird species.”

Colin is well-known to members for his cheerful personality, infectious enthusiasm and willingness to share his knowledge about birds. Through his work, he has encouraged and supported friends, colleagues, and bird enthusiasts to become careful observers of New Zealand’s birds and contributors to bird research.

## Banding Scheme joins Moulting Workshop

An online moulting workshop hosted by Birds New Zealand on 5 February included international expertise from Dr Santiago Guallar from the Museum of Natural Sciences of Barcelona and Catalan Ornithological Institute, Spain, as well as several local examples of moulting strategies presented by NZ experts. The sessions provided an overview of moulting in the annual cycle of birds as well as guidance on moulting scoring and analyses, and the practical application of moulting in ageing birds.

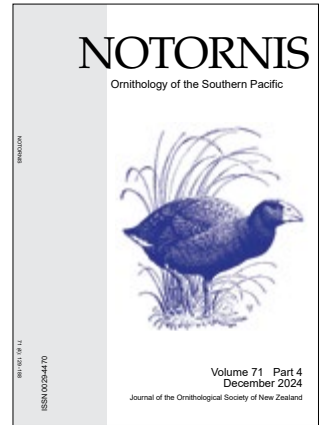
Bruce McKinlay, Convenor for the Moulting Recording Scheme, gave an update, and Dr Paul Fisher and David Melville showed some examples of different moulting cards in use in NZ and elsewhere. The Banding Office demonstrated how moulting data for banded birds can be submitted via the FALCON Bird Banding Database. We discussed how the Banding Scheme can provide support for the Moulting Recording Scheme and will form a Moulting Working Group to progress on this. An update will be provided during the Birds New Zealand annual conference in Auckland in June, including a discussion during the Banding Gathering to be held at the conference. Anyone interested in contributing or wanting to know more can contact: [moulting.record@birdsNZ.org.nz](mailto:moulting.record@birdsNZ.org.nz)

MICHELLE BRADHSAW, DOC BANDING OFFICER

## Notornis published online

The September 2024 and December 2024 editions of our acclaimed scientific journal, *Notornis*, have been published online, and the upcoming March 2025 edition will be published shortly. The September edition has papers on Amendments to the 5th edition (2022) of the Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand, records of *Thalassarche* albatrosses and *Procellaria* petrels in Ecuadorian waters, and the breeding biology of Kawau Pāteketeke New Zealand King Shags: [https://www.birdsNZ.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Notornis\\_Vol-713\\_September-2024.pdf](https://www.birdsNZ.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Notornis_Vol-713_September-2024.pdf)

The December edition has papers on a North Island Kokako recovery update: 2000 to 2023, the breeding biology of Hutton’s Shearwaters at a recently established colony at Te Rae a Atiu: Kaikoura Peninsula, and genetic data which confirms that *Diomedea platei* is the correct name for the population of Buller’s Albatross breeding at the Chatham Islands: [https://www.birdsNZ.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Notornis\\_Vol-714\\_December-2024.pdf](https://www.birdsNZ.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Notornis_Vol-714_December-2024.pdf)



▣ Auckland Island Merganser specimen: Te Papa/NZ Birds Online.

## Origins of extinct mergansers revealed

A new study led by Associate Professor Nic Rawlence, Director of the University of Otago Palaeogenetics Laboratory, has revealed the origins of mergansers in New Zealand. Mergansers are fish-eating river and coastal ducks now found mainly in the Northern Hemisphere, with a few rare species known from the Southern Hemisphere: Brazilian Merganser and at least two extinct species from NZ’s Auckland and Chatham Islands. Published in the *Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society* in 2024, the study shows mergansers arrived in the NZ region at least 7 million years ago from the Northern Hemisphere in a separate colonisation event to that which led to the Brazilian Merganser. Nic Rawlence says the study, “shows an increasing number of NZ’s birds don’t hail from Australia, with more cosmopolitan links with Madagascar, Africa, South America, and now the Northern Hemisphere.”





CP17586 juvenile female, completing partial post-juvenile eccentric moult.

## An online workshop to inspire renewed interest in moult studies

An online workshop about recording moult in the plumage of birds was held by Birds New Zealand on 5 February 2025. In welcoming participants Dr Natalie Forsdick, President of the Society, remarked that the event was historic as it was the first online workshop to be held by the Society concerning a research topic on ornithology.

Participants joined in from throughout New Zealand with even a few joining in from overseas. Natalie summarised the history of the Moulting Scheme that was launched by the Society in 1981 and has the aim of collecting information on the moult patterns of all New Zealand bird species, and pointed out that numerous questions concerning moult continue to puzzle ornithologists. Natalie welcomed Dr Santiago Guallar, Collaborator at the Museum of Natural Sciences of Barcelona in Spain and the Catalan Ornithological Institute, and a recognised international specialist on moult. He presented a broad introduction on the subject and made other contributions to the workshop.

In his introduction Dr Guallar reviewed the reasons, patterns, types, benefits and costs of moult in terms of rate of feather growth, aerodynamics and flight risks for bird survival across various species. Dr Paul Fisher, David Melville, Rob Schuckard and Mike Bell presented moult case studies in Silvereye, South Island Fernbird, South Island Pied Oystercatcher and Swamp Harrier, describing much of what is known, and importantly, raising challenging questions for further research. Dr Guallar outlined in much detail the moult dynamics and the application of statistical techniques for the analysis for moult datasets using House Sparrow and Monk Parakeet (an invasive species in much of Europe and North America) as case studies.

Mike Bell described the use of photography to examine moult in Fluttering Shearwaters using photographs provided by eBird observers, a promising tool for studying moult in seabirds that spend most of their lives at sea. On behalf of Graeme Taylor, David Melville described moult studies and techniques in burrowing seabirds, notably the Taiko, Grey-faced Petrel and Flesh-footed Shearwater. Studies using stable isotopes may have potential in some moult studies. Speaking from California, Dr Jesse Conklin's presentation on individual moult in Bar-tailed Godwits from digital photography shows this method to be helpful yet time-consuming.

Birds New Zealand's Moulting Recording Scheme and its future management was discussed by Bruce McKinlay, while Michelle Bradshaw described the ability to record moult data in the NZ National Bird Banding Scheme FALCON system. Options for recording moult and collating moult records in the future were discussed by Dr Guallar, David Melville and Dr Fisher.

A lively Q&A session demonstrated the high level of engagement from participants, covering numerous topics and identifying areas where additional support and future research are desirable. Nearly 100 participants took part in the online workshop. Proceedings were recorded and will be made available as an educational resource on the Birds New Zealand website. Funding for the workshop was provided by the Birds New Zealand Research Fund and online support was kindly provided by Nelson City Council.

IAN ARMITAGE, VICE PRESIDENT

## Changes to the New Zealand Checklist

The 6th edition of the *Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand* was published on the Birds New Zealand website in December (<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/society-publications/checklist/>). The previous editions were published in 1953, 1970, 1990, 2010 and 2022, with the first four published as books and the 5th edition (2022) published as a PDF and HTML webpages. This 6th edition exists solely as updated web pages, with explanations of what has changed and why contained within the manuscript, 'Amendments to the 5th edition (2022) of the *Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand*' (*Notornis* 71(3): 93-114: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/society-publications/checklist/>).

The Checklist Committee now intends to update every two years but is yet to decide whether to produce occasional PDF versions of the entire Checklist (e.g. once a decade), or whether the Checklist will exist solely as web pages from now on. This depends partly on whether there is demand for a PDF version from you, the users. It will also be constrained by the technical challenges of creating a PDF from the web pages while ensuring the content in both versions remains identical.

The New Zealand checklist is a much more complex document than most (maybe all) other regional and global checklists. In addition to the basic list of scientific names (with authorities) and common names grouped within orders and families, it also provides comprehensive synonymies for each scientific name (the history of how and when each name changed after the taxon was originally described), and information on breeding and vagrant distributions. It is also exceptional in containing details for all fossil species.

The main source of new distribution information for vagrant birds in New Zealand are the biennial reports of the Records Appraisal Committee, which have been published in *Notornis* every two years since 2011. The 2023 report was the main source of new distributional information included in the 2024 edition of the Checklist, and Birds New Zealand intends to continue this pattern of the two documents being published in alternate years.

This means that there is now a much more rapid channel for your observations to end up in the Checklist. If you observe a reportable bird and submit an Unusual Bird Report that is accepted by the Records Appraisal Committee, the record should appear in an RAC report within 1-3 years of the UBR being received, and in the next Checklist update within 2-4 years (depending on the date of your UBR submission within the biennial cycle for both publications, and which issue of *Notornis* the two reports are published in). I make no apology for the Checklist only citing verified records that can be found in a published paper, rather than citing unverified sightings from online sources such as eBird. For example, I note some eBird contributors have deleted their records, or have said they intend to do so.

In the 6th edition we have added three new vagrant bird species to the New Zealand list (Black Tern, Black-naped Tern, Matsudaira's Storm Petrel), along with entries for 11 newly-described fossil bird species. Two species splits have been made, with separate entries for Tibetan Sand Plover and Siberian Sand Plover (formerly Lesser Sand Plover), and for Fulmar Prion and Pyramid Prion. Genus changes include: sand plovers, Red-capped Plover, NZ Dotterel and Banded Dotterel shifting to *Anarhynchus*; NZ Shore Plover and Black-fronted Dotterel returning to *Charadrius*; and Banded Rail returning to *Hypotaenidia*. Fairy Prion is recognised as having two subspecies, with *Pachyptila turtur eatoni* being the form of prion that breeds on Heard Island. This means that Lesser Fulmar Prion *Pachyptila crassirostris flemingi* is endemic to the Auckland Islands, and Fulmar Prion as a species is endemic to New Zealand (breeding only on Snares, Bounty, and Auckland Islands, but not the Chatham Islands). New Zealand Birds Online web pages have been created or updated, and their sequence revised to match the 6th edition.

COLIN MISKELLY, RAC CONVENOR



North Island Weka: JL Kendrick.

## Population genetics of Weka on Rakiū Island

Weka on Rakiū Island off north-east Aotea Gt Barrier Island in the Hauraki Gulf originated from the locally extinct Gisborne population. Weka may pose a threat to other native species, so estimating the conservation significance of this population for North Island Weka (*Gallirallus australis greyi*) as a whole is important.

With assistance from the 2023 Birds New Zealand Project Assistance Fund, we were able to survey a sample of 65 Rakiū Weka by making use of feathers collecting during a temporary translocation from the island in 2018 (for rat eradication), along with 31 representatives from five other North Island populations. We used Weka-specific markers including mitochondrial Control Region (Trewick *et al.* *Closing the gap: Avian lineage splits at a young, narrow seaway imply a protracted history of mixed population response.* *Molecular Ecology*. 26(20): 5752-5772, 2017) and novel nuclear microsatellite loci designed on our recently published Weka genome (Gaspar *et al.* *De-novo assembly of four rail genomes: A resource for comparative genomics.* *Ecology and Evolution*. 14(7): e11694, 2024).

The Rakiū Island population contained three mtDNA haplotypes spanning diversity documented previously in Gisborne (extinct), Mokoia Island, Kawau Island as well as Opitiki (Trewick *et al.* 2024). Similarly, variation screened with novel microsatellite markers was highest (in the present sample) among the Rakiū Weka, in terms of number of alleles, presence of private alleles and heterozygosity. Pairwise FST values among the population samples Rakiū weka were the most differentiated. Together these data suggest that the Rakiū Weka contain(ed) as of 2018 a reservoir of genetic diversity that may be significant to North Island Weka conservation. However, available sampling of mainland Weka spans 1993 to 2017 and Rakiū in 2018. Population changes have certainly occurred in that time with the former primary native population near Gisborne going extinct. Small island populations including Rakiū, Mokoia and Kawau are likely to be subject to genetic drift, and so gradually lose diversity. Targeted sampling of North Island Weka populations will allow important update of the status of this lineage and the diversity held within remaining populations. The newly developed markers promise to make further genetic screening efficient and effective and could form the basis of a revised management strategy to best protect North Island Weka *Gallirallus australis greyi* which has a much more restricted range than its southern cousin.

The fate of the Rakiū Weka may be subject to conflicting demands but we note that although the current population on Rakiū is not indigenous it is likely that the island formerly had a native Weka population prior to human involvement. Volcanic activity in the Miocene generated landforms near the margins of mainland coastline of this region of North Island. Global sea level changes during the Pleistocene meant that for most of its subaerial existence Aotea and Rakiū were part of the mainland North Island, and would thus have shared fauna and flora.

OLIVIA EDIRIWEERA & STEVE TREWICK,  
MASSEY UNIVERISTY



Albatrosses scavenging bait discards from a commercial fishing vessel (Bank Peninsula, 2024): Aimee van der Reis.

## Albatross diet: natural prey versus fisheries bait/waste

Seabird injury or death caused by interactions with New Zealand commercial fishing activities is a major conservation concern with many interactions occurring in commercial surface longline and trawl fisheries. Albatrosses are

among the most threatened seabirds and along with other seabird species are attracted to fishing vessel activity as an additional food source. This puts them at risk of interacting with vessel structures (collisions can cause fatal injuries) and fishing gear (birds can get caught on baited hooks and drown). This includes incidental capture as 'bycatch' while feeding on hooks with bait or fish discards. It is not clear to what extent the diet of albatrosses consists of naturally foraged prey in comparison to fisheries bait/waste associated with commercial fishing activity, and ultimately their reliance on commercial fisheries as a food source.

In this dietary study, scat from colony birds and stomach contents from necropsy samples (commercial fishing mortalities) were used to detect taxa consumed by 10 albatross species that breed in New Zealand using DNA metabarcoding. Scat samples (n=86) were opportunistically collected from four Subantarctic Islands between January 2019 to April 2024. Albatross necropsies (n=72) took place from September 2022 to February 2024. Based on the frequency of occurrence, the diet among all albatross samples consisted largely of fishes (> 50% deep-sea and beyond known albatross diving depths) and to a lesser extent cephalopods. Differences in prey diversity (higher in necropsy samples) were found to be significant between sample types, however, no specific prey species were found to be responsible for this difference. Observers and fishers reported bait and discard species were predominantly squid and mackerel.

Overall, the majority of fish and cephalopod species identified in both colony scat and necropsy samples overlapped extensively with species that were most likely to be made available through commercial surface longline and trawl fisheries activities, i.e., discard/species targeted/bait used. These results suggest that albatrosses are heavily reliant on commercial fisheries as a food source whether they were sampled from fishing vessel bycatch (necropsy) or from nesting sites (scats).

This study was part of the Department of Conservation's Conservation Services Programme. The final report is posted online here: <https://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/conservation-services-programme/csp-reports/202324-csp-reports/Albatross-diet/>. Molecular reagent costs to expand the methodology used was supported by the 2023 Birds New Zealand Research Fund.

AIMEE VAN DER REIS, FANG FEI THAM,  
KAREN MIDDLEMISS & ANDREW JEFFS



This albatross drowned on a longline hook after it tried to eat the bait on it: Graham Robinson.





▲ Birds New Zealand President Natalie Forsdick presenting on her genomic research at the 2024 annual conference: Michael Szabo.



▲ Ian McLean at Ambury Regional Park.

## Birds New Zealand President Natalie Forsdick

Natalie Forsdick is the second woman to lead Birds New Zealand as President, after Beth Brown (1983-88). Natalie has been President since June 2024. Previously she served for three years as Vice President and three years as a member of the Society's Council. She was awarded the Best Student Presentation award at the 2017 annual conference for her talk on the conservation genetics of the Chatham Island Black Robin. In 2017 she received a grant from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund for her research on the evolutionary history of Australasian stilts. More recently, she has applied her research training as an active member of the Birds New Zealand Scientific and Checklist committees.

She has an MSc (Hons) in Biological Sciences (University of Canterbury, 2016) and a PhD in Genomics (University of Otago, 2020), and has worked for Manaaki Whenua - Landcare Research since 2020 as a conservation genomics researcher. Her research involves studying the DNA of threatened species to understand their evolution and to inform conservation management. Currently she works with a range of species, including birds, insects, and plants. While she can sometimes be found collecting samples in the field, her time is mostly spent extracting DNA in the lab, or analysing genetic data from the office.

Natalie is leading Birds New Zealand in a new phase of activity following the Society's NZ Bird Atlas project ending in 2024. She is dedicated to promoting the Society to ensure continued growth, providing opportunities for members to participate in data collection and bird observation projects, and supporting bird research. She will be at the 2025 Birds New Zealand annual conference and AGM in Auckland on King's Birthday weekend (31 May - 2 June) and is looking forward to catching up with members and participants during the weekend.

## Survival and recruitment of Pakahā at Kokomohua

This project aims to understand the survival and recruitment of Pakahā Fluttering Shearwaters into the Kokomohua Long Island colony, including identification of returned translocated chicks back to the natal colony during the 2024/25 breeding season. Marlborough members, mana whenua and DOC will work collaboratively on this project with the aim of understanding survival of Pakahā, recruitment into the Kokomohua population, and site fidelity by identifying any returned translocated birds. A longer-term aim will be to understand the population status and trend of Kokomohua Pakahā using data collected during this and previous site visits as well as future visits planned as part of the long-term research project. Under the supervision of New Zealand National Banding Scheme Level 3 Seabird Trainers, banding training will be provided to personnel, focusing particularly on junior Birds New Zealand members and mana whenua, involved in each of the field visits. Funding supplied by Birds New Zealand through the Project Assistance Fund will allow Marlborough Birds New Zealand members to travel to Kokomohua this season building on previous work at the colony. We thank the 2024 BNZRF and PAF for their support.

ELIZABETH 'BIZ' BELL,  
SAMANTHA RAY (WMIL) & PATRICK CROWE (DOC)

## Auckland Regional Representative Ian McLean

I have always been interested in birds and am a bit of a bird nerd. However, birding was very much a secret hobby of mine and to this day many of my friends still know me as a keen soccer player rather than a birder. With age my footballing ability dwindled, so I joined Birds New Zealand and I have now been the Auckland Regional Representative for 10 years.

The role of the Regional Representative is to help foster the study and enjoyment of birds. That requires organising a local programme of events including monthly meetings, public talks, regular bird surveys that assist conservation, and various media activities. For example, I organise regular guided public bird walks at Ambury Regional Park and Cornwall Park, undertake regular surveys of wading birds of the Kaipara and Waitemata harbours, organise beach patrols of Pakiri, Muriwai and Karekare beaches, give lectures about birds to community groups, and do the occasional TV or radio interview. It can be a challenging role because I need to do things outside my comfort zone, such as talking to large groups of up to 100 people, but I very much enjoy the role because I love to share knowledge about birds to help inspire interest in our birdlife.

This year the Auckland region is organising the annual conference on King's Birthday weekend (31 May - 2 June). I'm looking forward to seeing all the scientific presentations and catching up with members, researchers and bird enthusiasts from around the country. Please join us if you can for New Zealand's largest annual conference about birds and new bird research: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/nz-bird-conference-2025/>

IAN McLEAN, AUCKLAND REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE

## Third of NZ native species will be 'highly vulnerable' to climate change by 2050

Many of New Zealand's native species face being squeezed out of their habitats with nowhere to go as the climate heats up, according to the lead author of a new risk assessment. The most vulnerable species include Tara Iti New Zealand Fairy Tern, Pāteke Brown Teal, Kakī Black Stilt and 50% of the country's species of seabird, including Snares Crested Penguin. The new Department of Conservation assessment looked at 1,145 native species - including birds - and found that almost a third would be highly vulnerable to climate change by 2050. By 2100, that figure increased to 65% of species. Project leader, DOC Senior Science Adviser Anni Brumby said some of those species could not adapt. "It really depends on the species, but often there simply isn't anywhere else they can go and this is especially true of coastal and alpine species," she told RNZ. "Snares Crested Penguin only breeds on one island and may have nowhere to go if climate conditions change drastically." DOC's assessment found that Tara Iti was particularly vulnerable to higher spring tides and increased storm surges at its four Northland beach breeding sites. Link to report: <https://www.doc.govt.nz/about-us/science-publications/series/science-for-conservation/trait-based-climate-change-vulnerability-assessments-of-terrestrial-taxa-in-aotearoa-new-zealand/>



Examples of tagged Banded Dotterels with colour-bands (left, female “RB-RL”) or an engraved leg-flag (right, male “5K”). White leg flags are positioned on the right tibia and have a two-character alphanumeric code. The four colour-band combination is positioned on the tarsi. Photos by Ailsa McGilvary-Howard & Kaspar Delhey.

## A new era for Pohowera Banded Dotterel Research

The endemic Pohowera Banded Dotterel is one of the few non-seabird avian species that breeds in Aotearoa New Zealand and winters overseas.

Early colour-banding efforts in the 1970s and 1980s which were carried out by the OSNZ and the Victoria Wader Study Group revealed that Pohowera wintering in Australia came almost exclusively from populations breeding in the Southern Alps of Aotearoa New Zealand, whereas individuals breeding on coastal sites here remained sedentary or exhibited short domestic migrations (Barter & Minton 1987, *Stilt* 10:9–14; Pierce 1999 *Notornis*, 46:101–122).

In the decades that have passed since then, the ecosystems utilised by Pohowera on both sides of the Tasman Sea have experienced a number of changes, such as an increase in predation pressure (or a decrease following eradication), wind-farm and hydro-electric dam developments, and a warming climate.

These alterations are likely to have influenced how Pohowera schedule their migration, navigate Aotearoa New Zealand's flyways, and whether they remain here or migrate across the Tasman Sea to Australia.

The New Zealand Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai and the Max Planck Institute for Biological Intelligence are now embarking on a new long-term Aotearoa-wide project that re-opens the early investigations of Pohowera migration carried out in the 1970s and 1980s.

The new project combines large-scale colour-banding with state-of-the-art satellite tracking and population genomics. We aim to understand the factors shaping Pohowera migration behaviour, quantify the extent of gene-flow between migrants and residents, and map the key habitats that Pohowera rely on throughout their annual cycle.

Your observations of Pohowera are a vital part of this research. By reporting sightings of marked Pohowera, you will be contributing directly to tracking their movements, understanding their behaviour, and informing conservation efforts.

Please look out for individual birds with a unique combination of four-coloured bands or an engraved leg flag (see example in photos above) and share your sighting details with us. If you observe a marked bird, please send your sighting information to: [b.dot.resighting@doc.govt.nz](mailto:b.dot.resighting@doc.govt.nz)

In return, we will send you details about the bird's history and migration movements, along with an annual update about the progress of our new project.

Thank you for your support in advancing our understanding of Pohowera migration. If you have any questions to ask, please do not hesitate to contact us with them.

KATIE GREY, LUKE EBERHART-HERTEL,  
EMMA WILLIAMS & BART KEMPENAEERS



Willie Cook in action at a recent Red-billed Gull nest count: Maggie Atkinson.

## Willie Cook, Nelson-based bird bander

Willie Cook is well known to many of our members in the Nelson region. But for those who have recently joined or haven't met him, he's wonderful company. He arrived in New Zealand in 1961 (aged 23) from his Tayside home near St Andrews in Scotland. He says that he can't remember a time when he wasn't fascinated by birds. He's been known to reminisce about his early years in the Caledonian pine forests watching Red Squirrels, Red Grouse and Roe Deer. Initially living in Rotorua, Willie moved to his current property in 1968 where he got involved with horticulture.

It wasn't long before Willie met up with Dr Graeme Elliot who was researching aspects of the Waimea Estuary and together with Don Cooper started trapping to try to save a rapidly declining Banded Rail population. It's hard to imagine this now, in an era where we are fortunate enough to see traps set in so many areas, but back in the 1980s the idea was being postulated that everything should be left alone as 'equilibrium' would eventually be reached!

Trapping was almost unheard of, and Willie ran into much negativity, with traps being destroyed. Thankfully the trapping of over 400 stoats has allowed Banded Rail and other bird species to survive and while not an everyday sight they are doing OK in our area. He says that one thing that truly makes him happy is the change in attitudes towards conservation and seeing the efforts from so many to help what we almost destroyed.

Willie has also been involved in much more. Since retiring he has volunteered with the DSIR and DOC on many projects. These have taken him to such wonderful places as the Chatham Islands, Antarctica, and the Kermadec Islands. He is a level 3 bander and as well as netting and banding birds he has been involved with the translocation of several species, including Yellow-crowned Kakariki and Fluttering Shearwater in the Marlborough Sounds.

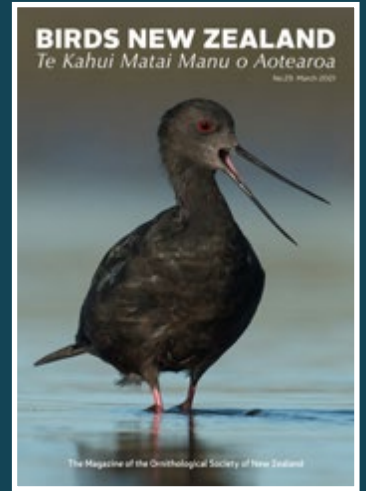
PAUL BENNETT

## Birds New Zealand on Facebook

Birds New Zealand's popular Facebook page continues to grow, and now has over 12,000 followers, up from 8,500 followers in 2020. We regularly post New Zealand bird photos and topical news about New Zealand birds and bird research, along with updates on the important work that Birds New Zealand does the country. Social media can be a powerful way to promote New Zealand birds and our Society. If you are on Facebook, you can check out our page here and share it with friends:

<https://www.facebook.com/Birdsnewzealand>





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## Direct evidence of frugivory in early bird

A recent paper describes direct evidence of frugivory in an early bird known from early Cretaceous era fossils (145-100 million years ago). Longipteryx was an early Cretaceous enantiornithine with an elongated beak with unusually large teeth at the tip. Enantiornithes were the dominant group of terrestrial Cretaceous birds and their close dinosaur relatives (J. O'Connor & A. Clark et al. September 2024, Current Biology). The authors point out that diet is one of the most important aspects of an animal's ecology, and that modern birds have a highly efficient and versatile digestive system which allows them to utilise diverse food resources. They go on to say that digestive function has been proposed as a factor in the selectivity of the late Cretaceous mass extinction, in which only neornithine dinosaurs survived [a dinosaur group that subsequently evolved into birds]. They also point out that while diet is directly documented in several early-diverging avian lineages, only a single specimen preserves evidence of diet in Enantiornithes.

The paper concludes: "Statistical analysis of rostral [beak] length, body size, and tooth morphology predicts Longipteryx was primarily insectivorous. Contrasting with these results, two new specimens of Longipteryx preserve gymnosperm [tree] seeds within the abdominal cavity interpreted as ingesta [food]. Like Jeholornis [a genus of avialan dinosaurs that lived about 120 million years ago during the early Cretaceous in China], their unmacerated preservation and the absence of gastroliths indicate frugivory."



▣ Longipteryx painting: Ville Sinkkonen.



▣ Australian Gull-billed Tern pair with juvenile, Waimea Inlet, December 2024: Steve Wood.

## Second NZ record of successful breeding of Australian Gull-billed Tern

A pair of Australian Gull-billed Terns successfully fledged two young in Waimea Inlet (Tasman) in December 2024. A first attempt in mid-October failed when the egg was lost (apparently washed out). The birds (presumably same pair) laid again in late October/early November, and very young chicks were present on 28 November. Three chicks were seen, but one was found dead on 22 December with a puncture wound to the breast - possibly from an attack by a Caspian Tern. The remaining two chicks were seen flying on 26 December. Both young were seen on 30 December but none were present on 1 January 2025. A third "adult" was present periodically throughout the nesting period. Early on it had only a partial black cap and appeared to be an immature, but later was indistinguishable from the breeding pair. Bernd Huss photographed two adult and two juvenile birds together in Waimea Inlet on 4 January and Craig Martin photographed what was likely the same family group at Motueka Sandspit in early February.

DAVID MELVILLE





▲ View of Kolombangara: Bruce McKinlay.

# Tropical tweets – bird watching adventures in the Solomon Islands

Article by Ilse Corkery

I stepped off the plane in the capital, Honiara, on a Sunday evening looking forward to exploring the avian treasures of the Solomon Islands. This trip was particularly special for me; apart from a few days during overseas holidays, this was my first fully guided, dedicated birding trip. I wasn't entirely sure what to expect, but the anticipation and excitement were palpable.

Greg Roberts, a fellow birder from Australia, and I were met at the airport by Brendan Mautoa of Tourism Solomons, our guide for the next week. He took us to the Heritage Park Hotel where we shared a light meal and discussed the plans for our trip. We would be birding mainly on three islands, Guadalcanal, Kolombangara and Rennell, which involved four internal flights and two coastal boat trips.

The next morning, I awoke to the calls of various birds and eagerly stepped out onto my balcony. To my slight disappointment, the first bird I spotted was an introduced Common Myna! However, that was quickly followed by the more exciting sight of a Singing Starling (my first lifer of the trip!) and a Willy Wagtail. The morning saw us return to the airport, driving along roads lined with Frangipani and Acacia. The trip had officially started, and I was ready for the birding adventures that lay ahead.

## Kolombangara – helicopter hornbills and running rails

Getting to Kolombangara involved a flight to Munda, New Georgia, with a brief stop at Seghe Island, offering breathtaking views of numerous tiny islands, before we reached Munda. After lunch in Munda, we embarked on a 45-minute small boat journey across the water to Kolombangara. Along the coast, we spotted two impressive Eastern Ospreys atop a large nest and during the crossing we saw Brahminy Kite, Great Crested Tern, and Greater Frigatebird. Nearing Kolombangara we spotted the distinctive *solomonensis* subspecies of Common Kingfisher.

Upon arrival, we were picked up and rode in the back of a ute, eagerly birding during the ride to Imbu Rano Lodge. Easiest to see were brightly coloured Cardinal Lories flying around. Apparently, the lodge is designed primarily as a base for scientists researching the high-altitude forests of Kolombangara, but it also caters to adventurous trekkers. It sits on top of a ridge overlooking a valley, with amazing views of the surrounding landscape, including the twin peaks of Mt Rano and Mt Tepalamenggutu.





▲ Roviana Rail: Tourism Solomons.



▲ Melanesian Kingfisher: Tourism Solomons.



▲ Eastern Osprey: Michael Szabo.



▲ Black Noddy: Michael Szabo.

The lodge is part of a conservation area where logging is restricted above 400 metres, except for some selective logging by the lodge owners. We had a very pleasant first evening's birding from the balcony, the highlights being White-capped Monarch, Kolombangara Monarch, Solomons White-eye, Oriole Whistler and Solomons Cockatoo. Day one yielded 24 species for me so the birding here required far less sweat and effort than I'd imagined! After a couple of cold drinks on the deck I went to bed full of anticipation for the day ahead.

The next day we started early, with breakfast at 5:45am. After an hour of birding from the deck, during which we spotted the Pale Mountain Pigeon, we headed up the mountain. The hike from 340 metres above sea level at the lodge to the first base camp at 640 metres was hot and sweaty but rewarding, including briefly seeing a Crested Cuckoo Dove. At our lunch picnic site, we spent around 20 minutes observing a flock of Kolombangara White-eyes actively foraging, a dark olive green island endemic that is only found at higher altitude. In total, we walked about 12km at a fairly leisurely pace but with the humidity, it felt a lot further!

My highlight that day was seeing the huge noisy hornbills. Blyth's Hornbill is one of the largest flying birds in Melanesia and is usually heard before its seen – the sound of its wings flapping reminded me of a helicopter! The forest was teeming with life, from beautiful butterflies to interesting spiders and insects, and even a cool skink that we tentatively identified as *Emoia schmidtii*.

On our return hike to the lodge, we rested and spent another very pleasant hour birding from the balcony (picking up

Mackinlay's Cuckoo-Dove) before a truck took us to a guest house at Ringi Station. The air-conditioned room there was a welcome relief. An evening walk yielded sightings of Song Parrots, White-rumped Swiftlets, and Sahul Sunbirds, plus some large Solomons Flying Foxes visible from the balcony. Dinner was chicken and sweet potato, and I was happily exhausted by the end of the day.

The next day began with another early start as we set out to search for the elusive endemic Roviana Rail. Despite our best efforts, luck wasn't on our side. However, after breakfast, we drove to a more densely forested area, and our fortunes changed! We first heard the distinctive call of the Roviana Rail before catching fantastic views as it ran across the track in front of us multiple times. We also saw Claret-breasted Fruit-Dove and Solomons Brush Cuckoo. Our next target was the Beach Kingfisher, but we dipped.

The boat trip to Gizo was fun in itself, and along the way we spotted Black Noddies, Black-naped Terns, and Lesser Frigatebirds. It was an exceptionally hot day, but despite that, we made another attempt to find the Beach Kingfisher. Although we didn't see it there, we were rewarded with sightings of a Melanesian Kingfisher and an Oriental Hobby, and while walking across the runway to the coast, we encountered Whimbrels and Pacific Golden Plovers.

### **Rennell – giant crabs and pygmy parrots**

We kicked off our adventure to Rennell bright and early. Our small 16-seater plane left Honiara airport heavily laden with luggage. Fortunately, we managed to secure our seats, though





▲ Rennell Starling: Tourism Solomons.



▲ Bare-eyed White-eye: Tourism Solomons.



▲ Rennell Fantail: Tourism Solomons.



▲ Silver-capped Fruit Dove: Tourism Solomons.

others weren't as lucky. After we touched down on Rennell's grassy airstrip, we were swiftly transported to our guesthouse.

After a quick coffee and some delicious coconut cake, we set out for our first Rennell birding expedition. The excitement was palpable and fairly quickly we spotted five of the island's seven endemic species: the bright green Rennell White-eye, orange-eyed Rennell Starling, enigmatic Rennell Shrikebill, snappy Bare-eyed White-eye and yellow-bellied Rennell Gerygone (or warbler). An evening stroll yielded endemic number six: Rennell Fantail. Buoyed by our success we set our sights for the next day on the seventh, the elusive buffy brown Rennell Whistler, and the newly split Vanikoro Island Thrush.

On day two there, we had another a fantastic morning's birding, with great views of a Variable Goshawk and colourful Melanesian Flycatchers. Both the skulking Island Thrush and the melodic whistler made appearances, much to our delight. The afternoon brought heavy rain, so we relaxed on the deck with coffee and biscuits. A later walk along the airstrip produced 49 Pacific Golden Plovers and a Moustached Treeswift. We found the endemic *pygmaeus* subspecies of Australian White Ibis was common there. With its unusual pink legs, red nape patch and small size, Greg Roberts thinks it is surely a candidate for splitting.

On day three there, a morning walk rewarded us with a sighting of the scarce Bronze Ground Dove. The previous

day's elusive bird, Rennell Whistler, today surrounded us, singing away and providing multiple sightings! Whereas on Kolombangara I was awed by the huge hornbills, here I was amazed by the tiny Finsch's Pygmy-Parrots. These miniature green parrots search for food by moving up tree trunks or climbing along the underside of branches while hanging upside-down, feeding on fungi and lichens.

Other striking birds we encountered included Cardinal Myzomela and Pacific Kingfisher, and we were pleased to find the orange-bellied Silver-capped Fruit Dove was widespread. That afternoon, we visited a hidden cave (complete with bats) with a deep pool, perfect for a refreshing swim.

Rennell, the southernmost island in the Solomon Islands, and the world's largest raised coral atoll, felt quite different to the other islands we visited. We encountered no other tourists there, making it feel quite remote. The island's forest, despite previous logging activities, still boasts some impressive trees. However, the pervasive Mile-a-Minute Vine is smothering much of the native vegetation there. Another invasive species, the Giant African Snail, is ubiquitous and wreaks havoc on crops and the island's biodiversity. Rennell's history of bauxite mining is also evident. More interestingly, it is home to the world's largest crab species: Coconut Crab. We never saw a live one, but it is prepared as a local delicacy, which we had the pleasure of feasting on one evening!





▲ Pacific Kingfisher: Tourism Solomons.



▲ Rennell Shrikebill: Michael Szabo.



▲ Australian White Ibis, pygmaeus subspecies: Michael Szabo.



▲ Ilse Corkery at Rennell airfield.

## Guadalcanal – coucals and cuckooshrikes

We had three separate nights in Honiara on Guadalcanal. The main airport there is the hub for all the other islands. Our first birding excursion on Guadalcanal was to Honiara Botanic Gardens but because of time limitations we only had an hour there one afternoon. Bird activity was quiet there, but we managed to see a couple of Superb Fruit Doves and the Island Imperial Pigeon.

On our second visit to Guadalcanal, we visited Paranjigu Lodge in the hills outside Honiara. On the way we picked up the impressive Buff-headed Coucal, known for its wide range of noisy calls. When we arrived the lodge was bustling, with many cars parked outside and locals walking the nearby tracks. It was quite hot, not ideal for birding, but after about 30 minutes, the crowds thinned, and the birds started to appear. We first spotted three different cuckooshrike species and the Guadalcanal endemic Black-headed Myzomela. We also saw Chestnut-bellied Monarch and Steel-blue Flycatcher on the nearby forest trails and found that the Long-tailed Myna, with its distinctive yellow eye-patch, was common.

Afterwards, I enjoyed a cold drink back at the lodge and chatted with some other visiting birders. We all marvelled at a Yellow-bibbed Lory close to the deck and a flock of Midget Flowerpeckers on a nearby bush. Despite a slow start, the afternoon turned out to be fantastic, with ten new species spotted in just three hours.

Our last birding excursion there was to Mt Austin near Honiara. The endemic Woodford's Rail (also known as Guadalcanal Rail) was one of our target birds for the morning and we got a fleeting glimpse of one early on, and we also saw Ultramarine Kingfisher and Solomons Monarch. Later on, walking down a small forest track, we heard about eight Woodford's Rails and had a decent view of one. We also saw a Banded Rail and several Brown-winged Starlings. So, in the last hours of our trip, we'd added five new species to our list!

My overall impressions were that birding in the Solomon Islands was incredibly easy and enjoyable, with great views and multiple sightings of truly unique birds. We saw a total of 85 species with a large proportion of them being lifers for me, which helped make it an epic birding experience. Our guide Brendan Mautoa knew his birds, knew the areas we visited and was fun to be around! With so much to offer in so many ways, the Solomon Islands is a destination where you could easily bring non-birding partners or family members, and they would have an awesome time too.

*Ilse Corkery is a former Birds New Zealand Northland regional representative. She travelled to the Solomon Islands as a guest of Tourism Solomons in October 2024. Their website has more information on visiting the Solomon Islands, including birdwatching: <https://www.visitsolomons.com.sb/>*





▲ Gentoo Penguin, Rose Island, 5/2: Matt Jones.



▲ King Penguin, Enderby Island, 5/2: Matt Jones.



▲ Eastern Rockhopper Penguin, Taieri River mouth, 30/1: Oscar Thomas.



▲ Erect-crested Penguin, Ashley Estuary, 9/2: Samuel Amaris.

## Bird News

Some sightings have not received official acceptance by Birds New Zealand's Records Appraisal Committee (1st September 2024 – 1st March 2025).

Spring and summer produced some notable pelagic seabirds, moulting penguins, migrant waders and interesting terns. Among the waterfowl, **Australian Wood Ducks** continued to thrive in the Tasman District, with 10 at Stringer Creek in Waimea Inlet on 3/12, 14 at Playhouse Ponds on 2/1, up to 4 at Hoddy Creek between September and January, and 10 at Appleby on 29/12. A drake **Northern Shoveler** was at Bromley WTP (Christchurch) on 10/12, and 3 **Plumed Whistling Ducks** were seen near Reefton on 23/10 before 10 turned up at Lake Killarney in Takaka 19-24/12. The only **Australian Chestnut-breasted Shelduck** report was 1 at Pākawau in Golden Bay, 10-24/12.

The **Adélie Penguin** found at Petone Beach (Lower Hutt) on 12/10 was taken into care and later released at sea off the Wellington south coast on 17/11. The number of unusual penguin records during the January-February period was noteworthy, starting with an **Eastern Rockhopper Penguin** found ashore near Taieri River mouth in Otago on 30/1. A **Gentoo Penguin** was found on Rose Island, just south of Enderby Island in Port Ross (Subantarctic Auckland Islands) on 5/2. The same day 1 **King Penguin**, 1 **Tawaki Fiordland Crested Penguin** and 12 **Eastern Rockhopper Penguins** were seen on Enderby Island itself.

Moulting crested penguin records in Otago during January-February included the following numbers being taken into care at the Otago Peninsula Eco Restoration Alliance (OPERA) facility near Taiaroa Head: Tawaki (9), **Erect-crested** (7), **Snares Crested** (1), **Eastern Rockhopper** (1). On 4/2, OPERA had individuals of all 6 penguin species that breed in New Zealand in care: the aforementioned 4 plus **Hoiho** and **Kororā**. In Canterbury, single **Erect-crested Penguins** were found ashore at Waikuku on 6/2

and 8/2, at Ashley Estuary on 9/2, and at Ashburton River mouth and Decanter Bay on 9/2.

Further north, the regular 'Petrel Station' pelagic trips from Tutukaka out past the Poor Knights Islands produced a steady run of notable seabird finds. Foremost was the **Indian Ocean Yellow-nosed Albatross** seen on 22/9. There were 6 species of albatross (2 **Gibson's**, 2 **Northern Royal**, 4 **Salvin's**, 2 **Buller's**, 1 **Black-browed**, 32 **White-capped**) plus 1 **Southern Giant Petrel** and 1 **Wilson's Storm Petrel** on 12/10; followed by 1 Southern Giant Petrel on 13/10; 1 Wilson's Storm Petrel and 1 Southern Giant Petrel on 18/10; 1 **Hutton's Shearwater** and 2 Wilson's Storm Petrels on 27/10; and 3 Wilson's Storm Petrels and 1 Short-tailed Shearwater on 31/10. Highlights during 3 consecutive day trips (2-4/11) included 23 **Mottled Petrels**, 5 Wilson's Storm Petrels and 2 **Short-tailed Shearwaters**. Then there were 24 Mottled Petrels, 2 Wilson's Storm Petrels and 1 Hutton's Shearwater on 11/11, and 2 **Campbell Albatross**, 3 Short-tailed Shearwaters and 1 Wilson's Storm Petrel on 16/11. Highlights during 5 consecutive day trips from 28/11 to 2/12 included 16 **Black-winged Petrels**, 15 Mottled Petrels, 1 Hutton's Shearwater, 40 Short-tailed Shearwaters and 2 Wilson's Storm Petrels. A lone **Wedge-tailed Shearwater** was seen on 9/12, followed by 2 on 10/2.

Other notable seabird reports included a **White-bellied Storm Petrel** found injured on the cruise ship 'Ovation of the Seas' as it was entering the Port of Auckland on 29/10. After being taken into care at BirdCare Aotearoa it succumbed to its injuries. One (possibly 2) Wilson's Storm Petrel was photographed flying along the beach at Farewell Spit on 17/11. A white morph Southern Giant Petrel found in Lyttelton Harbour was taken into care on 25/11 and released in late December once it recovered, and there was an unconfirmed report of a **Common Diving Petrel** at Lake Wānaka in early February.





▲ Snares Crested Penguin, Taiaroa Head (OPERA), 25/2: Oscar Thomas.



▲ Indian Ocean Yellow-nosed Albatross, off Poor Knights Islands, 22/9: Aaron Skelton.



▲ Adelie Penguin in care at Wellington Zoo, 17/10: Michael Szabo.



▲ White-bellied Storm Petrel in care, BirdCare Aotearoa, 1/11: Ariel-Micaiah Wijaya.

An injured Mottled Petrel was found in Kumeu on 28/10 but it succumbed. A **Blue Petrel** found ashore at Kennington, Invercargill, on 8/9 was taken into care and successfully released after recovering. A **Broad-billed Prion** was reported at Glentanner seen in flight before it landed on the lake on 28/12. Two separate Broad-billed Prions found grounded in Christchurch city parks during January were taken into care. The remains of a dead **Streaked Shearwater** were found at Moa Point, Wellington, on 27/10. A **Black-bellied Storm Petrel** was reported from a Cook Strait ferry on 4/1. A juvenile **White-tailed Tropicbird** was photographed halfway between Tutukaka and the Poor Knights Islands on 29/1 followed by an adult at Piako on 21/2.

An Australian **White-necked Heron** was regular near Carters Beach (Westland) from 27/11 to 8/12 and an immature **Nankeen Night Heron** was photographed at Porangahau in Hawke's Bay on 8/10 and 13/10.

Migrant waders included a long-staying **Semipalmated Plover** that was regular at Big Sand Island (Kaipara) from 22/6 to 30/1. Big Sand Island also produced 1 **Great Knot** and 1 **Grey Plover** on 1/11; 1 **Grey Plover** and 1 **Greater Sand Plover** on 6/1; 1 **Grey Plover** on 30/1; and 1 **Greater Sand Plover** on 10/2. Another **Semipalmated Plover** was at Pukorokoro Miranda from 29/12 to 5/1. Little Waituna/Te Wai Parera wetland (Southland) produced a **Stilt Sandpiper** on 13/9, a **Sanderling** on 28/12, and a **Latham's Snipe** on 22/1. The snipe was seen again on 9/2 at a nearby wetland.

A **Terek Sandpiper** was at Ashley Estuary from 27/10 to 22/2; a **Shore Plover** at Southern Marsh in Napier on 7/11; an **American Golden Plover** was regular at Waimea Estuary from 22/11 to 6/12; and 1 **Lesser Sand Plover** (recently split as **Siberian Sand Plover**) and 1 **Greater Sand Plover** at Farewell Spit on 17/11.

The **Common Sandpiper** found beside the Oreti River on 4/1 hung around until at least 15/1. One **Greater Sand Plover** was at Pukorokoro on 8/12 and 22/1; 1 **Black-tailed Godwit** was at Waimea Estuary on 22/11 and 9/1; another 1 was at Pukorokoro on 22/1; and 1 **Hudsonian Godwit** was seen near Karamea River Estuary on 1/1. On 7/11, a **Black-tailed Native Hen** was reported with photos at Cascade Creek, Fiordland, which stayed to 18/12.

It was a standout spring for **South Polar Skuas** (aka Solar Skua). The regular 'Petrel Station' pelagic trips from Tutukaka recorded 1 **South Polar Skua** on 22/9; 1 **Brown Skua** on 29/9; 1 **South Polar Skua** and 1 **Long-tailed Skua** on 13/10; 1 **Long-tailed Skua** during a 3-day pelagic trip during 2-4/11; and 1 **South Polar Skua** and 1 **Long-tailed Skua** on 11/11. Further south, 2 **South Polar Skuas** were photographed with an **Arctic Skua** off Pukerua Bay (Kapiti Coast) on 5/12; 1 **South Polar Skua** was seen from Cook Strait ferry crossing the strait on 4/1; 1 **Brown Skua** was reported off South Bay in Kaikoura on 25/9; and further north a **Pomarine Skua** was seen in Whangaroa Bay, Northland, on 6/1.

Among a long list of interesting tern reports, a pair of **Australian Gull-billed Terns** bred in Waimea Inlet (Tasman) from mid-October, successfully fledging 2 young in December 2024. A third adult was present periodically through the nesting period. Two adults and 2 juveniles were seen together in Waimea Inlet on 4/1 and then at Motueka Sandspit in early February. Up to 5 were reported at Pukorokoro Miranda from September to December. The summer wader census in the Firth of Thames recorded 2 on 3/11; 2 were seen at Piako on 22/11 and 1 on 21/2; 1 was regular at Maketu (BoP) from 12/10 to 6/12, and 1 was at Te Wherowhero Lagoon (East Cape) on 9/1/25.

Further north, 1 **Sooty Tern** was seen in Whangaroa Bay, Northland, on 6/1 and further south, 1 was at Okarito on 15/2, both with flocks of **White-fronted Terns** (WFTs). A **Great Crested**





▲ American Golden Plover, Waimea Inlet, 22/11: Steve Wood.



▲ Latham's Snipe, Little Waituna, 22/1: Bradley Shields.



▲ Common Sandpiper, Oreti River, 8/1: Saryu Mae.



▲ Gt Crested Tern, Muriwai, 25/10: Oscar Dove.



1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



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7.



8.

- ▲ 1. White-necked Heron, Carters Beach, Westland, 8/12: Sue Courtney; 2. Whiskered Tern, Nowells Lake, Hawera, 15/12: Jenny Kerrisk; 3. White-winged Black Tern (breeding plumage), River Cass, 20/12: Noah Fenwick; 4. White-winged Black Tern (non-breeding plumage), Boulder Bank Nelson, 26/12: Rebecca Bowater; 5. White-tailed Tropicbird off Tutukaka, 29/1: Ashton Reiser; 6. Broad-billed Prion in care, South Island Wildlife Hospital, Christchurch, January 2025; 7. White-headed Pigeon, near Te Kao, Far North, 6/11: Peter Kapa; 8. Southern Giant Petrel (white morph), Lyttelton Harbour, 25/11: Emma Crew.

**Tern** was found with a flock WFTs at Muriwai, south of the gannet colony, on 24/10 that stayed to 27/10. The summer wader census in the Firth of Thames recorded 2 **Eastern Common Terns** on 3/11. One was also found at Waimea Estuary on 9/1; 1 at Nelson boulder bank on 16/11; 1 near Pākawau in Golden Bay 24/12; 1 at Manawatu estuary on 30/12 and 17-20/1; 1 at Ashley Estuary from 9/11 to 7/2; 1 at Golden Bay on 26/1; 1 at Waikanae on 26/1 and 3/2; and 1 at Ruawai Northland on 3/12 and 30-31/1. A lone **Arctic Tern** was photographed during a Wrybill Tours pelagic trip off Stewart Island on 19/11.

A **White-winged Black Tern** was regular in August-September at the Tukituki River mouth in Hawke's Bay. Three were seen at the Opihi River Mouth (Canterbury) on 27/10 including 1 coming into breeding plumage among a flock of 20 **Black-fronted Terns**. One was at Maketu Spit 17/11; 1 at Awarua Bay Road in Southland on 1/12; 1 in full breeding plumage among the Black-fronted Tern colony on the River Cass on 20/12; 1 at Nelson Boulder Bank on 26/12; and 1 was regular at Wattle Farm Reserve (South Auckland) from 28/7 to at least 20/1. Further south there were 2 at Kaiapoi oxidation ponds and the adjacent Waimakariri

River on 21/1; 4 at Kaitorete Spit tip on 16/2 including 1 starting to go into breeding plumage; and 1 at the Ashburton River mouth on 20/2. A putative Whiskered Tern was seen at Te Atatū Orangihina Reserve on 10/11, and then 2 were seen at Nowells Lake, Hawera, on 15/12, one in full breeding plumage. There was 1 NZ Fairy Tern at Big Sand Island on 1/11, followed by 13 **Eastern Little Terns** and 3 NZ Fairy Terns there on 30/1.

A long-staying Australian **Dusky Woodswallow** was regular in Oban, Stewart Island, from 9/9 to 14/10; an **Eastern Barn Owl** was seen near Mangawhai on 20/10; a **White-headed Pigeon** was seen near Te Kao in the Far North on 6/11; a **White-rumped Swiftlet** was at Antipodes Island on 6/12; and a juvenile Australian **Pallid Cuckoo** was found dead on Inland Road, Helensville, on 30/1. Lastly, a **Common Myna** was photographed on Banks Peninsula on 9/12 followed by an unverified report of 2 in Rolleston on 17/2.

Sources: Unusual Bird Reports, BirdingNZ.net Forum, eBird NZ, New Zealand Birders Facebook group, Regional Roundup, iNaturalist NZ.





■ Ian McLean, Cornwall Park guided walk: Rowena West.

### FAR NORTH

We have completed 3 surveys of 90 Mile Beach since our last report, each time travelling 30 km from Hukaterere to the Bluff. It was very interesting to see how many of the common birds that were initially absent have now come back. In November we saw 215 Southern Black-backed Gulls (SBBG), 10 Red-billed Gulls and 2 NZ Dotterels but no South Island Pied Oystercatchers (SIPO) or White-fronted Terns. In December there were 120 SBBG, 15 White-fronted Terns and 8 NZ Dotterels but no Red-billed Gulls or SIPO. Then on 7/2 there were 380 SBBG, 85 Red-billed Gulls, 413 SIPO, 5 NZ Dotterels and 228 White-fronted Terns.

Further south, Kevin Matthews reports visiting Walker Island in Awanui Harbour where he saw 11 Whimbrels, 55 SBBG (many of them young birds), 110 Caspian Terns, an estimated 3,500 Bar-tailed Godwits, and 2 marine turtles (swimming in the harbour). He also reports seeing a fledgling NZ Tomtit at Totara North and comments that he has regularly seen them west of Te Kao but no young birds until this sighting. There has been a lot of pest trapping done in the Totara North area which may well be helping them.

- ISABELLA GODBERT

### NORTHLAND

Many members of the branch attended Richard Parrish's funeral on 22/11. Richard had been a very active member of the branch until he moved to Auckland.

In November, Paul Fisher did not see an adequate window for catching Fernbirds so updated the branch on his latest assessment of Fernbird moult via the internet. We had a well-attended Christmas gathering at our Regional Representative Su Sinclair's home in December. The summer has been cold with substantial winds from the south. The small forest bird community has not bred well until late summer. The winds finally turned to the east on 8/1, and during a gale a week later Pat Miller collected a good variety of seabirds including a Wedge-tailed Shearwater.

The Red-billed Gull colony at CINZ (ex. Refinery) has had a good breeding season following the disastrous 1 last year but the more limited breeding colony's extent and estimated numbers present indicated that there had been a net loss of breeding pairs. There were still young chicks present in early January.

The expansion in the numbers of NZ Scaup in Whangarei wetlands between 2019 and 2023 appears to have finished in 2023. NZ Scaup were among the ducks killed in a

botulism or toxic algae event at Lake Road in summer and autumn 2024, but have also declined or disappeared from other sites. There are only 2 males left at Lake Road, Tikipunga, and 5 in the Whao Valley dam. A pair of Grey Teal have raised 3 young at the Kioreroa wetland. This is the first time that a pair of birds has nested there since the wetland was reconstructed in 2015.

- TONY BEAUCHAMP

### AUCKLAND

The annual South Kaipara census took place on 16/11 this year, attracting 19 participants who recorded the following numbers of Arctic migrants: 1 Greater Sand Plover, 17 Pacific Golden Plovers, 235 Ruddy Turnstones, 5,975 Red Knot, 1 Sanderling, 1 Curlew Sandpiper, 1 Eastern Curlew, 13 Whimbrel, 13,016 Bar-tailed Godwits and 1 Hudsonian Godwit. Small terns included 17 Eastern Little Terns (including a feeding flock of 7 at Walker Island) and 4 NZ Fairy Terns.

Sightings on our 15/12 Guided Bird Walk at Ambury Park included 3,050 Bar-tailed Godwits, 2,000 Red Knots, 25 Wrybill, 6 Nth NZ Dotterels, 2 Whimbrels, 20 Royal Spoonbills and a nesting colony of circa 200 Black-billed Gulls. Our Guided Bird Walk at Cornwall Park was also well attended with 30 enthusiastic participants. Birds seen included 2 Shining Cuckoos and 14 Common Pheasants in addition to Kereru, Tui and Grey Warbler.

Our first event of 2025 was our Annual Summer Picnic held at Cascades/Ark in the Park in the Waitakere Ranges on 18/1. On a hot summer's day, the numbers of birds seen was relatively few, but Kaka and a good population of Kereru were present. We also had a Birds New Zealand display stand at the Wetlands Festival Day event at Matuku Link on 1/2, which was attended by more than 600 people who kept our volunteers busy answering many interesting birding questions.

Our Muriwai South beach patrol on 9/11 found 17 birds of 8 species including 1 White-headed Petrel, 1 Fairy Prion, 7 Sooty Shearwaters, 2 Buller's Shearwaters, 1 Hutton's Shearwater, 1 Fluttering Shearwater, 1 White-faced Storm Petrel and 2 Australasian Gannets. Our Karekare beach patrol on 7/12 found a mini-wreck of shearwaters including 12 Sooty, 1 Short-tailed, 5 Buller's, 1 Hutton's, 2 Fluttering and 1 Little, plus 1 White-headed Petrel and 2 Fairy Prions. Examination of the shearwaters found that many were emaciated. By February, the numbers of wrecked shearwaters had greatly decreased with the only notable birds found at Muriwai South on 8/2 being 1 Gibson's

Albatross, 1 Sooty Shearwater and 1 Fairy Prion.

The Auckland region has only had a few sightings of rarities reported in recent months. Notably these included an Eastern Barn Owl seen on 20/10 and a Pectoral Sandpiper at Ambury Park in Mangere on 1/1. Neil Fitzgerald reports that he was contacted by Jasmin McCracken on 30/1 to say she had found a dead juvenile Pallid Cuckoo on Inland Road, near Helensville. We are hoping that more rarities will be found during the late summer and autumn!

- IAN McLEAN

### SOUTH AUCKLAND

At our November meeting, Kristal Cain from Auckland University gave a talk about her team's research on Titipounamu Rifleman, with a focus on vocal learning. Feeding calls were recorded at a site in Hawke's Bay. These were analysed and genetic information was compared to birds from other regions. They found that the young took a while to sound like adults, and that distantly related birds that lived near each other tended to sound more similar than close relatives living far apart. This suggests their sounds may not be innate and may be learned from each other.

Members have been involved in various activities over the last few months. Some joined in the Matuku Muster in October/November, and listened for Australasian Bitterns booming at Lake Pokorua, Mataitai and Whitford. Only 1 was heard. Ian Southey, with help from several members, ran a very successful youth camp at Pukorokoro Shorebird Centre in December, attended by 9 young people.

Local members and others joined in the summer wader censuses at Firth of Thames, Manukau Harbour and Coromandel Peninsula. Notable sightings included 2 Australian Gull-billed Terns, 2 Common Terns and an Eastern Curlew at Firth of Thames, and 3 Marsh Sandpiper at Manukau. We are seeing a decline in the number of volunteers joining in the censuses, which makes it challenging to cover all sites, so are keen to hear from anyone who can help in future. In mid-February, 17 people from our region attended a BBQ at David Lawrie's place where they enjoyed catching up and walking through his bush area.

Tuturiwhatu NZ Dotterel have been nesting at various locations around South Auckland, including Big Bay, Wattle Bay and Colbeck Spit on Awhitu Peninsula, Pavilion Drive and Kirkbride Rd near the airport, Mitre 10 in Onehunga, an empty commercial site in East Tamaki, a new subdivision at Clevedon, and Yashili dairy factory grounds in Pokeno, with

some producing chicks. Successful breeding results for this species include 14 pairs fledging 8 chicks at the Mangere Shell Islands, and 2 chicks fledged at a 'Park and Ride' car yard near Auckland Airport.

NZ Dotterel minders at Onemana Beach on the Coromandel report 9 pairs producing 44 eggs, 21 chicks, and 7 fledglings. Challenges included predation by harriers and a local domestic cat. Lastly, at Whangamata 16 pairs produced 7 fledglings, despite the large number of holidaymakers and visitors over the summer.

- SUE FROSTICK

## WAIKATO

We were very sorry to hear of the unexpected passing of past Waikato Regional Representative Bruce Postill on 2/1. Bruce had a wealth of knowledge having worked in conservation for a time all over the country. He had also served on the Board of the Pūkorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre, and will be remembered by all for his warm personality and generosity in sharing his rich knowledge of NZ birds and ecology.

In late November 'The Petrel Station' ran the inaugural Birds New Zealand members-only pelagic trip off Tutukaka out to the Poor Knights Islands and beyond. The trip included some of our Waikato members who had excellent conditions with several boil-ups sighted, resulting in over 100,000 seabirds being counted (thanks to Scott Brooks for counting!). Members were delighted to spot Grey Ternlets on a rock stack and a distant White-capped Albatross, among other species.

Speaking of pelagic species, Russell Cannings got out on a game-fishing boat from Whangamata just prior to New Years and noted 17 tubenose species including Northern Royal, White-capped and Salvin's albatross, well over 100 White-faced Storm Petrels, a couple of NZ Storm Petrels, 1 Black-winged Petrel, and 1 Pycroft's Petrel. Another highlight was a huge Manta Ray!

Since New Years it has mostly been quite hot and dry in the Waikato. Still, there are some interesting things to see out there including Whio and Whitehead which continue to be regular in urban Turangi, Long-tailed Cuckoo around Lake Rotopounamu, and re-introduced Kokako doing well on Mt Pirongia. NZ Falcons can turn up anywhere in our region; one was seen crossing the highway near Putaruru on 1/2.

Royal Spoonbills continue to find breeding success after establishing in the Waikato about 5 years ago. A visit to Lake Kimihia near Huntly produced no less than 111 birds using a minimum of 46 nests, and on 9/2, multiple fledged juveniles were seen at the Howard Memorial Wetlands in Te Aroha.

- RUSSELL CANNINGS

## BAY OF PLENTY/VOLCANIC PLATEAU

Local members attended the 'Welcome to the Godwits' event at Omokoroa in November to mark the annual arrival of the Bar-tailed Godwits - and arrive they did. While Keith Woodley was speaking to the assembled hundreds, thousands of godwits flew through the gap in the peninsula between Omokoroa's golf course and Tinopai sandbanks. Just under 7,000 birds were counted that day. A new bird hide of magnificent design was also unveiled. Little Egrets are also gracing the area, with

regular sightings throughout the summer so far. Unconfirmed through an *eBirder*, but quite possible, is a report of a Black-fronted Tern and an Australasian Bittern in the Matua Saltmarsh.

Only 14 chicks were banded this season at the Mauao Ōi/Grey-faced Petrel colony. The lowest rates of land-based pests in a long while were a good sign earlier in the season, but a combination of wet weather, strong Easterly winds and poor food supply put paid to many. While those chicks that did survive to fledge age were few, some were starving - which could mean the death of their parental birds.

- PAUL CUMING

## GISBORNE/WAIROA

A summer wader count at Te Wherowhero Lagoon on 9/1 by Geoff and Raewynn Foreman and Barry Foster recorded good numbers of godwits, and it was good to have the Australian Gull-billed Tern still at the lagoon where it was first sighted in November 2023. The following week Geoff and Raewynn joined me for the 'summer' wader count at Table Cape, Mahia, on a brisk 14C day punctuated with southerly squalls, which had us chasing scope rain covers along the rocks in the southerly wind! We had a good count of waders and the weather meant we saw a few pelagic birds too.

Weka continue to expand their range in our region, with video footage recently posted to social media showing 1 inland in Tokomaru Bay. Canada Geese also seem to be increasing their numbers, turning up in new places along the coast with hundreds recorded at the mouth of the Waiau River seen by Graeme Atkins.

After a good 10 years as Regional Representative for the Gisborne/Wairoa region while living in Wairoa, subsequently Geoff Foreman, supported by Raewynn, resumed the role after moving back to Gisborne some 20 years later. Geoff has now stepped down after a further 6 years in the role and Malcolm Rutherford has taken on the role and is looking forward to promoting Birds New Zealand in the region.

- MALCOLM RUTHERFORD  
& RAEWYNN FOREMAN

## TARANAKI

Some brief overnight rain has not helped the rapidly shrinking Widgey Lake where I am here at Pūkorokoro Miranda, and the district is in much need of some rain. Reports from back "home" in Taranaki are similar. I was back at Waiongana for Christmas, and just after that I realised a long-planned project.

For many years I have been seeing NZ Dotterels on my beach, sometimes up to 9. Where do they come from? Where do they go? I had discussed this with Adrian Riegen earlier last year and he had very generously offered to come down and band some chicks for us in the summer. "There has to be more than one though", he said, in conjunction with the ever-enthusiastic Dr Emily Roberts from Wild for Taranaki we hatched a plan. Emily has contacts with DOC, local iwi, and local volunteers. Adrian arrived on 27/12 and that evening we gathered at Waiwakaiho beach on the eastern side of New Plymouth where a pair of NZ Dotterels had 2 chicks. The birds were soon found. Adrian then issued instructions, set up a mist net and in a few minutes both chicks were in captivity, weighed, banded and flagged. But it was not long before JPA and JPB were reunited with their very agitated parents.

The next day we did it all again. Sandy Bay on the Taranaki south coast has had breeding NZ Dotterels for many years. We were joined by some members of the Sandy Bay care group. We expected this capture to be a bit more difficult as the beach is long and wide with sand dunes. Once again, the birds were located, instructions issued, a net set up and in a repeat of the previous evening, the chicks were soon in the bag. While all this was happening, I located another 2 chicks so once we had flagged, banded, and released the precious bundles to their parents we retreated to the sand hills until all was settled. Then we repeated the procedure with the 2 other chicks. They were too small to flag at just 20g each so they were banded and released - mission accomplished with many photos, high fives, and hugs! This was a Taranaki first and because there is more to this story, I will write about it again next time.

I returned to Pūkorokoro for a few weeks, then came back to Waiongana for our annual 'Beach, Birds and BBQ' event. It was a fine warm day and 10 of us got together. Some of us walked the beach, managing to see the local birds including a NZ Dotterel and 5 summer resident Pacific Golden Plovers, then it was back to my house for a few rounds of pikelets, a BBQ and convivial conversation.

A notable report was 2 Whiskered Terns at Nowells Lake, Hawera, on 15/12. Jenny Kerrisk's photos show that 1 bird was in full breeding plumage.

- PETER FRYER

## HAWKE'S BAY

Our November field trip was our summer wader census, before we took a break for the festive season. Interesting sightings during the census included 5 Kohutapu Sharp-tailed Sandpipers and a Red-necked Stint at the Southern Marsh, and 7 Ruddy Turnstones at the estuary end of the Clive River. Good numbers of Tūturīwhatu NZ Dotterels (12), Pohowera Banded Dotterels (37) and Kuaka Bar-tailed Godwits (307) were also seen.

Lynne Anderson counted lots of Kuaka (104) between Pourere and Aramoana beaches, along with 42 White-faced Herons, the usual gulls, VOCs, Taranui Caspian Terns, shags, and Poaka Pied Stilts. During some 'informal' beach patrols, Ron Jackson found 5 Titi Sooty Shearwaters and 5 Pakahā Fluttering Shearwaters in December-January. Ron has been very active indeed: he also heard a Pūweto Spotless Crane clucking continuously at Haumoana in mid-January; and on 30/1 at the Scrapes, he spotted a Whimbrel and resighted a Pohowera that was banded at Westshore on 1/11. Lastly, another Pohowera - a bird banded at Clive on 31/10 - was re-sighted on the Stilt Pools at Pūkorokoro Miranda on 13-14 January 2025.

- THALIA SACHTLEBEN

## WHANGANUI

This summer in the Whanganui region has been 'birding as usual'. No rarities to report yet and no outstanding behaviour to write home about, but still plenty to see and photograph. Bar-tailed Godwit numbers settled at 23-33 birds, including our special godwit flagged AJD, who is preparing to depart on his 17th migration that I have been witness to. We expect him to depart on 25/1, or thereabouts, as is his habit. He moved over to our estuary, from Foxton, in December. AJD has been the impetus for visits to Whanganui of ecologists from





▣ Nankeen Night Heron at Upokongaro (Whanganui): Paul Gibson.



▣ Long Island Fluttering Shearwater banding team (Marlborough).

Alaska, Australia, and China, and for people from all over New Zealand. My book "Feats Beyond Amazing" has helped to stir up interest in this bird. Another godwit, with a metal band numbered Y-13477, is also on our estuary again. This bird was banded at Foxton the same day in 2008 as AJD's flag was fitted.

Twice recently we have found NZ Dotterels on our estuary, not a common bird here, although they do seem to be spreading along this part of the west coast. In the last couple of weeks, we have had hundreds of White-fronted Terns on the estuary, resting on the sand, on marooned trees mid-river, and even on the old shipwreck, *Te Anau*. Among them we found a Black-fronted Tern, not a common bird for Whanganui.

Pied Stilt numbers have been around 100-120 and it has been interesting to find at least 5 hybrid stilts among them, varying from some with just a little extra black on their head and breast, to 1 bird almost totally black, found and photographed by Jim Norris.

In January several of us checked for Long-tailed Cuckoos at Waitahinga Trails, a 40-minute drive north of Whanganui. Several birds put on a good display for us, including 1 that came and perched in the tree above us, and deafened us for 15 minutes with its harsh call! Nankeen Night Herons at Upokongaro have nearly finished their nesting for the season, which, from our observations, has been very successful. We located 10 active nests and observed chicks in many of them. It is a mystery though, that once the young birds fledge, they mostly seem to leave the area, and we have little idea where they go.

- PAUL GIBSON

**MANAWATU**

Recent notable sightings have included 5 NZ Dotterels at Ohau beach along with a Ruddy Turnstone, and an Australasian Bittern seen at the Foxton loop close to the start of the Piriharakeke walkway. At the Manawatū estuary up to 11 Pacific Golden Plovers have been reported along with up to 10 Wrybill, 32 Banded Dotterels, 1 Red-necked Stint, 1 Eastern Common Tern and 3 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers.

A pair of Royal Spoonbills were reported at the Tutaenui Reservoirs in Marton and some have also been seen foraging at the Rangitikei River estuary. Several local members have been out searching for Royal Spoonbill colonies. We surveyed more than 12 possible sites finding 4 colonies, all on private land.

The colonies had between 13 and 30 adults with nestlings and fledglings in at least 3 (results still to come from the the 4th colony).

Regional Representative Kirsten Olsen organised a field trip to Ashhurst Domain in December that was attended by 13 interested birders and photographers. We enjoyed seeing the Black-billed Gull colony at the confluence of the Manawatu and Pohangina rivers and talking about local birds and sites while walking in the bush.

Three members led the 'Bird watching' part of Koputaroa School's ecology-focused field trip to Foxton Beach on 3/12. There were 3 telescopes for the students to use and it was a joy to hear the students' amazed exclamations when they suddenly saw a giant bird - clearly and close-up - for the first time. "Oh, it has a bright orange beak" - yes, it's a Caspian Tern. "Wow, it has a really long thin bill" - yes, it's a Bar-tailed Godwit. "This one is so pretty - it's completely black and white all over and has really long spindly legs" (yes, it's a Pied Stilt).

We resumed our monthly meetings on 12/1. These are held on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:15pm in the Val Kenward Room at the Palmerston North Community Leisure Centre, 569 Ferguson Street.

- KIRSTEN BENDIX OLSEN

**WELLINGTON**

The Wellington region had a strong start to the year, with the February Members' Night presentations covering an interesting and diverse range of birdy topics, from overseas birding adventures on Lord Howe Island and Costa Rica to observations from public conservation land, council reserves and Wellington backyards. It is always a treat to see the varied interests of our birding community and learn more about these areas and topics, so many thanks to presenters Ian, Alfie, Saul, Duncan, Dianne, Alejandro, Dallas, Richard and Colin.

Our December presentation was a double 'special' with Maria Dussler presenting on the diving ecology of Procellaria petrels and Max Richardson on understanding Toutouwai NI Robin breeding biology and behaviour in a translocated population. Seeing presentations from university students on where avian research is delving into (especially for local projects/species) is of great interest to the local membership.

During summer, I've had the luxury of travelling to nearby regions and birding in their reserves and public conservation land. It has struck me that sometimes it is the little less well-known reserves which are filled with exciting viewings and unusual sightings just as good as any well-frequented birding locality. I encourage those birding in Wellington not only

to visit Zealandia and Ōtari, but also try other reserves and sites throughout the region, as you never know what gems you'll discover!

On that note, as we are all out and about more in summer, there is a greater likelihood of coming across banded birds. In Wellington, over 1,000 Kākā have been banded at Zealandia over the past 20+ years, so banded birds are now being found throughout the Wellington region. Sightings of banded birds (especially those in research projects from places like Zealandia) are extremely valuable to avian researchers, and I encourage all those who have recorded a banded bird (even if it's a historic photo from a few years ago) to consider lodging your sightings with the national banding scheme (<https://app.birdbanding.doc.govt.nz/>). I wish you all the very best in your birding endeavours over the coming quarter.

- ANNEMIEKE HAMILTON

**NELSON**

David Melville hosted Spanish ornithologist Dr Santiago Guallar, whose travel to New Zealand was sponsored by the Birds New Zealand Project Assistance Fund. 'Santi' works with the Museum of Natural Sciences of Barcelona and the Catalan Ornithological Institute, and has a wide interest in and knowledge of moult. He was here to participate in a moult workshop and training sessions in Nelson and Christchurch - over 90 attended the online workshop and 50 attended Santi's public talk in Nelson.

While Santi was in Nelson he joined David, Craig Martin and others helping Paul Fisher with his Fernbird research at Pearl Creek, Wakapuaka Flats, Sandy Bay, Marahau and Delaware. Thirteen new birds were colour banded; 10 were juveniles from this year. A further 6 were also recaptured, some in their 3rd+ year and assessed for moult. No Fernbirds were found at 3 Delaware saltmarsh sites where 5 juvenile birds were banded last year and 1 other bird seen; their absence is most likely from predation some time over the last 6 months, despite a local Forest & Bird trapping programme.

Rob Jones and Sharen Graham report lots of action around the Australian Wood Duck nest boxes on Playhouse Road, with wood ducks and Paradise Shelducks both laying eggs in 2 of the boxes. In 1 box, the wood ducks incubated both sets of eggs. Paradise Shelduck eggs hatch a week earlier than wood duck eggs (3 versus 4-week incubation), so the wood duck eggs failed after the incubating pair left with the 3 shelduck chicks which successfully hatched. The chicks survived 5 days but were attacked by a pair of adult shelducks which may have

led to their disappearance. Two other clutches of wood duck eggs (5 and 6 eggs) failed to hatch, but a family group with 4 chicks were reported nearby. A count will be made when the birds regroup into a large winter flock.

There has been no evidence of Royal Spoonbills breeding in Nelson, Tasman or Golden Bay. Regular trips to observe migratory waders on the Motueka Sandspit continue to be popular. Lastly, Rob Schuckard and helpers have continued banding Australasian Gannets at Farewell Spit and monitoring for H5N1 avian flu.

- KATHRYN RICHARDS

### MARLBOROUGH

Sam, Paul, Hunter and Pat joined for the summer wader counts at Lake Grassmere in December. The water level at the Lake was high so there weren't many waders around but there was still a good number of Banded Dotterels and the usual large numbers of waterfowl. Dianne counted the estuaries at Mahikapawa and Anakiwa and recorded plenty of White-faced Herons and a good number of SIPO. Pat counted the Wairau Lagoons high tide roost one day also, recording 205 Bar-tailed Godwits, 85 Pied Stilts, 3 Wrybills, 15 Caspian Terns and an Eastern Little Tern.

The Royal Spoonbills have bred successfully at the Blenheim Wastewater Treatment Plant with 3 or 4 pairs of Glossy Ibis also nesting among the spoonbills. Chicks have also been recorded in nests at the spoonbill colony at Lake Elterwater where they were first recorded breeding last season.

Weka appear to be increasing their range in Marlborough with individuals being recently recorded at the Wairau Bar, Grovetown Lagoons and even at Sutherland Stream near the base of the Wither Hills. Historically, Weka were not typically seen south of the Wairau River.

Wildlife Management International (WMIL) joined with our branch for a joint trip to Long Island in Queen Charlotte Sound to band Fluttering Shearwater chicks prior to them fledging. A total of 64 chicks were banded across a combination of artificial and natural burrows. Most chicks were healthy and heavy. A follow up trip to the Fluttering Shearwater colony on Maud Island took place at the end of January with 4 of the 6 breeding burrows (67%) successfully fledging a chick. This colony was established on Maud Island by Birds New Zealand members in the 1990s.

Several members participated in a guided birding trip down the Kōtuku Trail as part of the local DOC Summer Explorer Series. These trips are organised during summer school holidays to encourage members of the public to get outdoors to explore and enjoy nature. About 35 people attended with 33 species seen over 4 hours including NZ Scaup, Black-fronted Tern, Caspian Tern and Barbary Dove.

- PAT CROWE

### CANTERBURY

We would like to acknowledge the passing of Andy Anderson on 13/11 in Cromwell. Andy was a well-loved figure in the birding community in Canterbury and Otago. An adventurous spirit, he joined annual trips to Australia in search of special birds, mammals and reptiles, yet he found just as much joy in watching common birds on a Christchurch feeder.

Local members have been actively involved in surveys, including wader counts at Lake Ellesmere, beach patrols, and banding projects. A seabird highlight was the juvenile Indian Ocean Yellow-nosed Albatross seen off Kaikōura on 12/10 by Katherine Kirby and Fiona Leo with Albatross Encounter. A white morph Southern Giant Petrel found in Lyttelton Harbour was taken into care on 25/11 and released once it recovered. January brought multiple Erect-crested Penguin sightings, with 1 found moulting on Banks Peninsula and another at Waikuku Beach on 6/2, both relocated by DOC. Beach patrols at Birdlings Flat turned up a Soft-plumaged Petrel and multiple Broad-billed Prions, among other finds.

A long-staying Terek Sandpiper remained at the Ashley Estuary through summer, along with a Black Stilt and a Little Egret. An Eastern Common Tern was found on 9/11, followed by another in January. At Lake Ellesmere, Arctic migrants recorded at Clarks and Jarvis Roads included a Pectoral Sandpiper at Jarvis Road at the end of December, a Marsh Sandpiper that lingered near Yarrs Bay for most of summer, and a Sanderling sighted at the end of January.

A Glossy Ibis was reported at Wainono Lagoon on 2/12, followed by 2 Marsh Sandpipers at the same location on 4/1, and a lone NZ Dotterel at Waiua Uwha Lagoon on 22/11. A pair of Australasian Crested Grebes was seen on the Avon River in December, with 2 adults recorded between Cockayne Reserve and Pages Road Bridge—a promising sign of local wetland restoration efforts. A Northern Shoveler was found at Bromley WTP on 10/12. It was a good summer for Shining Cuckoos in Canterbury, and Long-tailed Cuckoos were reported near the Southern Alps, particularly in the Hawdon Valley and around Arthur's Pass. Weka were recorded at the Hawdon Hut and nearby, suggesting a potential range expansion into Canterbury. A rare sighting of a Kākā was reported from the Tasman River Delta on 17/11. Lastly, White-winged Black Terns once again teased birders with breeding behaviour, with 3 birds developing breeding plumage seen at the Opihi River Mouth on 27/10.

- SAMUEL AMARIS

### OTAGO

Although this is the first summer since the Society's recent New Zealand Bird Atlas project ended, Otago members have been as busy as ever. Following a wet start to the summer in Otago, weather conditions have since made for a sunny start to 2025.

There have been a range of interesting bird sightings including an Eastern Curlew at Waikouaiti/Karitane and an Eastern Cattle Egret. SI Robins have been regularly observed in Ross Creek Reservoir on the edge of Dunedin City. Various Weka sightings from urban Dunedin made the news although pondering how they have got here warrants concern. In contrast, a bird translocation to celebrate is the return of Tieke/SI Saddlebacks to Orokonui Ecosanctuary. This Mana Whenua-led translocation has seen the release of 103 birds from 2 of the Titi Islands off Rakiura Stewart Island.

Moulting crested penguin records have reached a new high for the region with over 20 records consisting of 4 species: Tawaki/Fiordland, Erect-crested, Snares and Eastern Rockhopper. While these species have long used

the local coastline to moult, sadly the majority of even healthy weight uninjured birds have had to go to rehab facilities (where staff are overwhelmed managing the Hoiho crisis) to complete their moult due to disturbance by dogs. Further inland, a Common Diving Petrel was found at Lake Wānaka, an Australasian Little Grebe at Diamond Lake, and our regional representative sighted a Red-legged Partridge.

Local projects have been busy with the eighth and likely final season of 'Robins Outside Orokonui' being a success with members taking part. Of the monitored nests, only 5 fledged successfully. The Otago Regional Council - Birds New Zealand Australasian Bittern monitoring partnership has increased coverage of acoustic monitors to over 88 sites from coastal to inland Otago, and has included supporting other community conservation groups with their monitoring. The Memorial Peter Schweigman Royal Spoonbill Nesting Survey took place in the Catlins in early December. While good numbers of birds were located at Nuggets and Rainbow Islets, nesting activity was low with few nests containing eggs or nestlings. Lastly, our regular indoor monthly meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:30pm.

- FRANCESCA CUNNINGHAME

### SOUTHLAND

It has been a good quarter for unusual birds in Southland. Sean Jacques' run of rare bird finds continued with identifying a Sanderling on 28/12, a Little Egret on 16/1 and a Latham's Snipe on 22/1, all at Little Waituna/Te Wai Parera wetland. Sean then relocated the snipe on 6/2 at another nearby wetland. Up to 6 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers were also in the area throughout the same period. With the lagoon being opened at the start of summer it is still very low, which makes this site good wader habitat. Little Waituna produced a Red-necked Phalarope 4 years ago while the Te Wai Parera wetland has produced a Long-toed Stint, a Stilt Sandpiper, and various Marsh, Sharp-tailed and Pectoral sandpipers.

Pete McClelland found a Common Sandpiper on the lower reaches of the Oreti River on 4/1 which hung around until at least 15/1. This bird was found just over 10 years after Glenda Rees found a Common Sandpiper further up the same river. On 8/11 a Black-tailed Native Hen was reported with photos by Cooper Jordan at Cascade Creek on the Milford Road, which was still present on 18/12.

The recent fire at Tiwai Spit has taken out a lot of Fernbird and Australasian Bittern habitat and probably a lot of Fernbirds. This wasn't the same area that burned 3 years ago, which was further into the Awarua wetland.

Lastly, a total of 103 Tieke South Island Saddlebacks were transferred from 2 of the Titi Islands off Rakiura to Orokonui Ecosanctuary near Dunedin. This will hopefully make the species more readily available to the public and visiting birders. Unlike previous attempts to establish them on mainland sanctuaries, the transfer involved a larger number of birds and included both hard and soft releases, with the ecosanctuary building a large aviary in the middle of the fenced area to acclimate the new birds to the site.

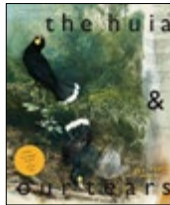
- PETER McCLELLAND

All our regional newsletters can be viewed online here: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/resources/regional-newsletters/>



# Reviews

**The Huia & Our Tears**  
Ray Ching  
Poorly Rabbit Press  
RRP \$80



This exquisite large hard cover volume by renowned artist Ray Ching is the ultimate illustrated book about the Huia, the largest of the New Zealand wattlebird species, which tragically succumbed to extinction in the early twentieth century. The author has collected together Huia stories and images and combined them with his own delightful drawings and evocative paintings to create a beautiful homage to the most sacred of the birds of Aotearoa.

Across the prologue and seven chapters he deftly weaves together stories and personal anecdotes with relevant drawings, paintings, photographs and prints that range from the historical to the poetic, and the real to the imaginary. As such, this is a splendid descendant of *The Book of the Huia* (1963) by WJ Phillips, which is reproduced in its entirety in the last 84 pages of this 280-page 26.5 x 24.5cm volume.

Ray Ching's painting on the front cover, from which the title of the book is taken, stands out for its striking portrayal of a female Huia with her head raised, eye closed and bill open as she calls out, while her mate lies dead on the forest floor. On the back cover there is a self-portrait of the artist cradling a nest with a female Huia sitting on it. On pages 52-53, the hauntingly beautiful *In a forest together, they danced and sang* depicts five Huia in various poses, annotated with quotes from eye-witness accounts. Elsewhere he recounts a description given by Mrs. C. C. Jackson of the "common sight" of Huia "swooping across the road from one tall tree to another" near Kaitoke in 1880, and two 1912 encounters with Huia in the Eastbourne hills told to him by Clarence Poynter in 1965. This is a compelling tribute to the Huia and the artist's work that rewards repeated perusal.

**Finding Australian Birds**  
Tim Dolby & Rohan Clarke  
CSIRO Publishing  
RRP AU\$59.99



Knowing where to begin birding in Australia can be bewildering. There are so many sites to cover (400 in here) and species to see (900)! This second edition, previously reviewed in this magazine (No. 16 December 2017), is a 'revised and improved' version - complete with a striking new cover featuring a Hooded Parrot.

The new edition has more than 30 new birdwatching sites and updated site access information. Although the dimensions remain the same (21.5 x 15cm) it is about 10% slimmer and by using a slightly smaller font it now comprises 566 pages rather than 602, and has a few more photos illustrating more species. The way the book is organised allows the authors to set out itineraries that take in all the main sites that have the most sought-after target species in each region of each state, and the 'Where to Find' section quickly shows you where to find target species.

There are also more details and tips on where a certain species is more likely to be seen locally. For example, Black-naped Terns often stand on pontoons at Michaelmas Cay. Blue-faced Parrot Finches usually arrive at a grassy clearing on Mt Lewis Rd 11.6km from the main turn-off in mid-November and depart in April. And there is a helpful description for navigating the Cooloola Way to a spot for Eastern Ground Parrot in Gt Sandy National Park. I have re-read the texts covering the east coast from northern Queensland to southern Victoria and Tasmania, and found them to be excellent. Having used the first edition to help plan multiple trips there, looking at the relevant entries again here has been a reminder of how well summarised they are. So, I can say from experience that it's well worth consulting this book if you're planning a birding trip in Australia.

MICHAEL SZABO, EDITOR

## A synopsis of game bird banding in New Zealand to year 2000

Birds New Zealand has published this account of the history of game bird banding in Aotearoa New Zealand in February as part of the OSNZ Occasional Publications series: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/society-publications/occasional-publications/>



Organised banding in New Zealand of birds that are seasonally hunted as game commenced in 1947 when wild Grey Ducks and Mallards were captured in Manawatu. From 1950, California Quail were caught and banded in central Otago and near Taupo as field studies of other game birds by Department of Internal Affairs Wildlife Branch staff commenced. At the same time, captive-raised Mallards and Common Pheasants were banded at release by acclimatisation societies, pre-empting a later legal requirement for banding of all released captive-raised game birds. By year 2000, approximately 150,000 of five species of introduced upland game birds (Galliformes) had been banded in New Zealand, including Chukar Partridge, Grey Partridge, and Red-legged Partridge, the latter two species ultimately failing to acclimatise. From this total, 7,267 were reported shot. By year 2000, approximately 370,000 of six species of wetland game birds - Black Swan, Canada Goose, Paradise Shelduck, Australasian Shoveler, Grey Guck, and Mallard (and their hybrids) - had been banded. From this total, 62,566 were reported shot. Banding records, and details arising from the reported recoveries of banded birds, were initially administered by the Wildlife Branch, Department of Internal Affairs 1947-66, after which records were amalgamated with the nascent Ornithological Society of New Zealand's bird ringing scheme for all other species, to form the New Zealand Bird Banding Scheme. Administered 1967-87 by the Wildlife Service, the scheme has been managed thereafter by the Department of Conservation. This narrative summarises the scales, locations, and durations of bandings of each game bird species, quantifies the recovery records for each, and reports on all published outcomes arising from the banding activities. Supplementary files provide recovery arrays (banding year by recovery year) for each of the wetland species to preserve historic records and encourage belated appraisal of much unprocessed band-recovery information.

See the full publication here: Williams, M. 2024. *A synopsis of game bird banding in New Zealand to year 2000*. Ornithological Society of New Zealand Occasional Publication No. 3. Ornithological Society of New Zealand, Wellington: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Game-bird-banding-Williams-2024.pdf>

MURRAY WILLIAMS

## Māori now a common name option in eBird

As part of the taxonomic updates in eBird, the Aotearoa New Zealand eBird team has worked with the eBird team to provide two common name updates; English (New Zealand) common names, as well as an exciting new common name option, te reo Māori! Bird names in eBird are based on the eBird/Clements taxonomy, which is maintained in English. eBird supports 107 languages and customised versions of bird names. There were 8 new additions this cycle, including Māori. To learn more, go to: <https://ebird.org/region/NZ/post/common-name-updates-aotearoa-new-zealand>

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