



BIRDS
NEW ZEALAND
Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa

MANAWATŪ

Newsletter December 2024

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From the Regional Representative

This is the last newsletter of 2024. The next Newsletter will come in February 2025. It has been fun to gather material for the newsletters during the year and I want to thank all of you who have contributed to the newsletter, at the meetings and by taking part in the various surveys and counts through out the year.

The last event of the year is the trip to Ashhurst Domain Sunday 15th December. You can still sign up for the trip.

I wish you all a happy summer with lots of birding. Take some photos, write a little story and send them to me, so I can add them to the first Newsletter of 2025. Have a lookout for Royal Spoonbills and report to me if you find any colonies.

Please send me photos and notes about your bird adventures and sightings or other bird news for the newsletter on kirsten.b.olsen@gmail.com . **Deadline for the February issue is 26th January 2025.**

The November 2024 meeting

Sixteen attended the meeting. Phil Battley talked about the Asia-pacific flyway meeting he attended in China and showed part of a Chinese documentary about wetlands, mainly about the Spoon-bill Sandpiper. Neill Haggarty organized a fun and informative bird quiz and Jackie Carr ran a 10-minute fun dress up quiz.



Bird sightings

Neill has summarised some of the rarer bird sightings in our region.

Seven Pacific Golden Plovers were seen at Foxton Beach/ Manawatū River estuary. Four of them were young birds. A red-necked stint was seen and photographed on 23rd November.

At Ohau beach a turnstone has been seen and a pair of NZ dotterel. They exhibited all the signs of a pair with a nest to protect. The photos to the right are Neill's photos of an adult that was acting as if hurt and stranded in water to attract attention.



Photos by Neill Haggarty

Spring/summer wader census

Organised by Phil Battley.

All the sites were covered. Seven members attended.

Phil Battley, Sue Moore and Jackie Carr went to the Manawatu River estuary; Stephen Legg and Kirsten Olsen went to the Rangitikei River estuary; Neil Haggarty went to Waikawa Beach and Cleland Wallach to Ohau river mouth. The outcome of the survey will be reported when Phil has received all the data and summarised them.

I tried out an adapter that should connect my phone to my scope, but it was quite difficult to adjust. I did manage to take some poor photos of Bar-tailed Godwits, but I think I need to practice more.



Photo by Stephen Legg

Sightings of Blue Ducks near Top Gorge Hut in The Ruahine

Chris Tuffley sent me this report:

I was in the headwaters of the Pohangina, rebaiting the Top Gorge section of the Ruahine Whio Protectors' trapline down the river with a visiting friend from overseas, when this whio / blue duck burst out of the tussock on the bank right next to me. It gave a short squawk as it emerged and settled on a rock a few metres away. I probably gave a squawk too! We'd no idea it was there until it moved. We must have got just a little too close for comfort - and if it had just stayed still we might have never known it was there.

It was our second Whio encounter of the trip: we'd seen a pair just below the hut the previous evening, while rebaiting the traps downstream. They were still there on the pool at the hut when we returned; with the light fading I reached for my sound recorder instead of my camera, and got some recordings of them calling. Was this Whio from the same pair, or were we far enough upstream to be in a new pair's territory? Maybe!

The Whio just sat there, nice and close and still and well lit, and we just sat there a while too, watching our fill. Then, reluctantly, we started moving upstream again, breaking the tableau. It fluttered to another rock further away; crossing to the other side of the narrow river we were able to manoeuvre past it, and I snapped a last few shots of it as it rode the current away downstream and disappeared. What an unexpected treat!



Photo by Chris Tuffley

Progress on the Peter Schweigman Memorial Royal Spoonbill Colony and Nest Count, 2024

During November, December and January a systematic, coordinated nationwide survey is being undertaken to locate Royal Spoonbill colonies and count active nests and number of birds in attendance at the colony. Each region is coordinating its own survey. In Manawatū we know that there are at least four or five likely nesting sites. But there might be more. If you are out and about looking for birds keep an eye out for Spoonbills. If you see groups of Spoonbills, try and find out if there are nests nearby. Please contact me if you find a nesting site. I can send you a field log to fill in or I can come and have a look at the site. If you want to take part in the colony and nest count please contact me:

Kirsten Olsen, email kirsten.b.olsen@gmail.com or phone 0273546010.

Some colonies have already been identified and a first count has been conducted. We have identified colonies at Omanuka lagoon between Himitungi and Tangimoana (29 spoonbills and two nests observed by Chris Tuffley and Lorraine Cook), Voss lagoon near Longburn (9 spoonbills and 2 nests observed by Stephen Legg and Kirsten Olsen) and Raumai Wetland near Pohangina (11 spoonbills and three nests). All three sites are on private land.



Royal Spoonbill colony at Omanuka lagoon. Photo by Chris Tuffley

Manawatū riverbed-nesting shorebird survey 2024

Nikki McArthur, a Birds NZ member based in Marlborough, organised a survey of the rivers in the Manawatū. Nikki sent this summary of the findings 12 November 2024:

I'm pleased to report that the Manawatū riverbed-nesting shorebird survey is now complete, with Ryan and Anna surveying the last 7 km of the Rangitīkei River today. We've now surveyed a total of 491 km of rivers in the Manawatū, and we're confident that this includes the vast majority of suitable riverine shorebird habitat in the region.

We've now counted a total of 59 adult SIPO breeding on the rivers of the Manawatū, which more than doubles the North Island breeding population estimate for this species. The Manawatū is clearly the North Island stronghold for this species, with an additional 26-46 birds also known to be breeding on the rivers of Hawke's Bay. Breeding SIPO appeared to be remarkably widespread on the Manawatū rivers, being found on all of the rivers surveyed except for the Ohau River and Kiwitea Stream. In contrast, the vast majority of the SIPO breeding in Hawke's Bay occur on the middle and upper reaches of the Ngaruroro River, between Whanawhana and Fernhill.

Our banded dotterel count for these Manawatū rivers stands at 508 adult birds, averaging out at 1.03 birds per km of river. In comparison, the rivers of the Wairarapa support 261 adult birds, averaging 1.24 birds/km and the rivers of Hawke's Bay support 2,066-2,418 adult birds, averaging 7.07-8.38 birds/km. The rivers of Hawke's Bay clearly stand out as the stronghold for banded dotterels in the North Island, with the rivers of the Manawatū and Wairarapa supporting much lower numbers of birds.

We've also now counted a total of 814 black-fronted dotterels on these Manawatū rivers, averaging out at 1.66 birds/km. In comparison, the rivers of the Wairarapa support 420 adult birds, averaging 1.99 birds/km, and the rivers of Hawke's Bay support 987-1,405 adult birds, averaging 3.38-4.81 birds/km. Again, Hawke's Bay stands out as a stronghold for black-fronted dotterels in New Zealand, with the rivers of the Manawatū and Wairarapa supporting lower numbers of birds. Despite this, it's clear from our surveys that black-fronted dotterels are now both more numerous, and more widespread, than banded dotterels on the rivers of both the Manawatū and Wairarapa, whereas banded dotterels remain more numerous on Hawke's Bay rivers.

A couple of other highlights from our last week of survey work was a flock of 17 sulfur-crested cockatoos spotted on the Rangitīkei River upstream of Vinegar Hill, and a small pied shag nesting colony on the lower Rangitīkei near Scotts Ferry.

Lastly, I just wanted to say thank you to you all for taking an interest in this survey, and a huge thank you to our survey team members: Anna, Chris, Emma, Lorraine, Robin and Ryan, all of whom have worked incredibly hard and endured some challenging days out on the rivers to help bring this survey to a successful conclusion.

Nikki McArthur

Trip to Ashhurst domain Sunday 15 December 2024

Kirsten Olsen is organising a bird outing for Birds NZ Manawatū branch members to Ashhurst domain and Manawatū River near the domain on Sunday the 15th December.

We will explore the wetland/field area, the Manawatū River area and the adjacent bush. It will also be an opportunity to learn to use eBird.

We will leave Milverton Park at 8:40am, carpooling or meeting at 9am at the Ashurst domain near the campground. I expect that we will be finished at around 12 noon at the domain and at Milverton park at 12:30.

If you are interested, please contact me: Kirsten Olsen by email kirsten.b.olsen@gmail.com or by phone 027 354 6010, latest Wednesday 11th December.

Ashhurst Domain is an eBird hotspot. 45 species have been observed there over the years. Thirty-one species have been seen this November. Black-billed gulls seem to be breeding at the confluence of Pohangina and Manawatū rivers. New Zealand Falcon have been seen there the last five years but have not been seen there since February 2024, so that could be a target to find it. You can explore the list of birds that have been seen there on eBird via this link: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L866627>



Three New Zealand Falcons at Ashhurst domain 14th December 2023

Photo by Chris Tuffley, source: eBird: <https://ebird.org/atlasnz/checklist/S156286147>

Upcoming meetings

Birds NZ Manawatū meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month, **7:15pm in Val Kenward Room at the Palmerston North Community Leisure Centre, 569 Ferguson Street.**

Meetings in 2025

I have arranged speakers for the first two meetings next year:

12th February 2025

Diets of Protea pollinators, sunbirds and sugarbirds.

Speaker: Dr Ian Van Tets

Associate Professor, Dept. of Biological Sciences & Alaska WWAMI School of Medical Education, University of Alaska, Anchorage.

12th March 2025,

Annual Meeting (Financial status, Annual report to Council) and
Birds of the Ruahine

Speaker: Chris Tuffley

Meeting dates for the rest of 2025:

9th April

14th May

11th June

9th July

13th August

10th September

8th October

12 November





NATIONAL KIWI HATCHERY TOUR

Exclusive for Birds NZ members

**21ST JANUARY 2025
1 PM, AGRODOME
ROTORUA**

See Conservation in Action

Birds NZ are funding research to help identify the wild diets of young kiwi using eDNA. This work will improve the captive nutrition of Operation Nest Egg kiwi chicks.

We are inviting you to join us on a guided tour of the NKH to see Operation Nest Egg in action & to learn more about the nutrition study.

Join us for a fun all ages tour with the researchers & hatchery experts and see how you can get involved.



© Whakatane Kiwi Trust



**RSVP BY 6TH
JANUARY**

for more information & to
RSVP please contact
lindsey.gray@sydney.edu.au

or call/message via
WhatsApp
+61424403614

Links to other regions' newsletters and programmes

South Auckland Newsletter - November: birdsnz.org.nz/news/south-auckland-newsletter/

Notices

2025 BirdsNZ Conference

The 2025 Birds New Zealand Conference and Annual General Meeting will be held in **Auckland** from **31st May-2nd June** over King's Birthday weekend. All events and meals will be at the Novotel & IBIS Auckland Ellerslie Hotel.

Deadline for **early-bird registration is 28th February 2025**.

Abstracts must be submitted by 31st March 2025.

Online registration and conference details will be available soon.

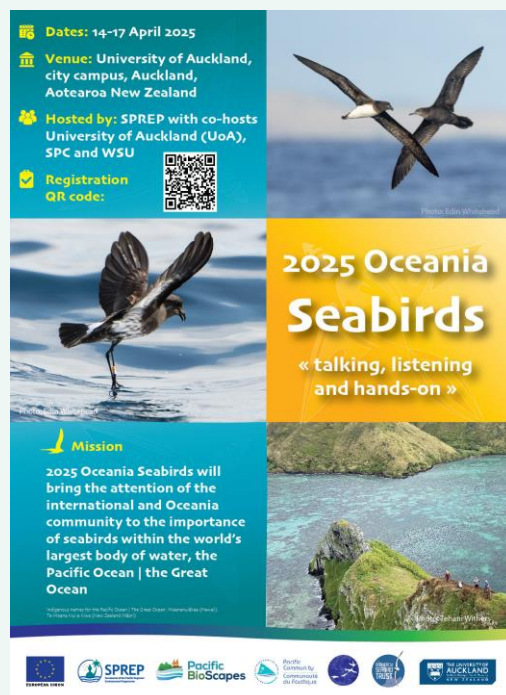
13th Australasian Ornithological Conference

BirdLife Australia and Birds New Zealand are excited to announce the **13th Australasian Ornithological Conference (AOC)** will be held in **Perth/Boorloo**.

The AOC will be held from **Tuesday 18 – Thursday 20 November 2025** at the University of Western Australia, with side events planned for the days before and after. The AOC is the primary conference for BirdLife Australia and Birds New Zealand. The largest biennial gathering of amateur and professional ornithologists and avian researchers from Australasia. Key dates will be available soon. Sign up for email updates at <https://birdlife.org.au/events/australasian-ornithological-conference-2025/>

Oceania Seabird Symposium (Auckland) birdsnz.org.nz/news/oceania-seabirds/

The Oceania Seabirds Symposium will now be held from 14-17 April 2025. Due to the ongoing political situation in New Caledonia the symposium will now be held in Auckland.



The poster for the 2025 Oceania Seabirds Symposium is a collage of images and text. It features a blue and yellow color scheme. The top left section contains event details: dates (14-17 April 2025), venue (University of Auckland, city campus, Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand), hosts (SPREP with co-hosts University of Auckland (UoA), SPC and WSU), and a QR code for registration. The top right shows two seabirds in flight. The middle left shows a seabird landing on water. The middle right has the title '2025 Oceania Seabirds' and the tagline '« talking, listening and hands-on »'. The bottom left section states the mission: '2025 Oceania Seabirds will bring the attention of the international and Oceania community to the importance of seabirds within the world's largest body of water, the Pacific Ocean | the Great Ocean'. The bottom right shows a coastal landscape with a cliff and the ocean. At the bottom, there are logos for the European Union, SPREP, Pacific BioScapes, Pacific Community (Secretariat of the Pacific Area), and the University of Auckland.

Dates: 14-17 April 2025
Venue: University of Auckland, city campus, Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand
Hosted by: SPREP with co-hosts University of Auckland (UoA), SPC and WSU
Registration QR code: [QR Code]

2025 Oceania Seabirds
« talking, listening and hands-on »

Mission
2025 Oceania Seabirds will bring the attention of the international and Oceania community to the importance of seabirds within the world's largest body of water, the Pacific Ocean | the Great Ocean

Logos: European Union, SPREP, Pacific BioScapes, Pacific Community (Secretariat of the Pacific Area), University of Auckland

Health and safety

The Birds New Zealand Council has asked the regions to include health and safety information in the newsletters.

Health and safety of Birds New Zealand's members when they participate in Birds NZ organised activity, like meetings, collection of data and fieldtrips, is important to the Council. The [Health and Safety Policy](#) can be found on Birds NZ webpage. Press [Here](#) to get to the policy.

To make it more practicable, the Council has developed [health and safety guidelines for field trips](#) that also can be found on the website.

The guidelines state: *“At a health and safety briefing before a field trip commences the trip leader will describe the route, any specific or potential physical difficulties that might be encountered, and the approximate times for lunch, tea breaks and the end of the trip.”*

It further states: *“If a member has an allergy or medical condition, they should bring their own anti-histamines and personal medications. The trip leader should be advised of medical problems a member has and how to deal with them. Bring a mobile phone and share phone numbers with others. Don't hesitate to call 111 for any incidents involving injury.”* (...) *“The trip leader should check the weather forecast for the day and, if necessary, monitor the weather conditions during the trip. Turn back if the weather deteriorates. Each member should bring sufficient food and drinking water for their personal needs.”*

Finally, it is stated in the policy:

“Instances of accidents or ill health of members and others whilst carrying out activities in any capacity for Birds New Zealand are required to be reported promptly to the Regional Representative who in turn will advise the President without delay. Records of accidents will be recorded in the annual reports of Regional Representatives.”

So please, if you have any incident that could have resulted in injury or results in injury while participating in Birds New Zealand activity, report it to the Regional Representative. In Manawatū it is: Kirsten Olsen, email birds.manawatu@birdsNZ.org.nz or phone 027 354 6010

Contribution to future Birds NZ Manawatu newsletters

Please send photos and text that would be appropriate for this newsletter.
To Kirsten Olsen kirsten.b.olsen@gmail.com .

Deadline for February 2025 issue: 26 January 2024

Please send your contributions to: kirsten.b.olsen@gmail.com

Contacts in Birds New Zealand Manawatū Branch:

Regional representative: Kirsten Olsen

email: birds.manawatu@birdsnz.org.nz

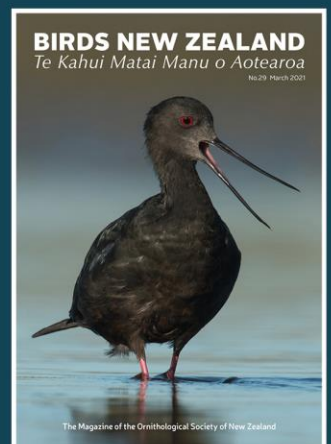
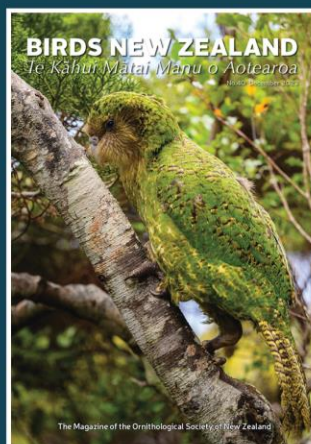
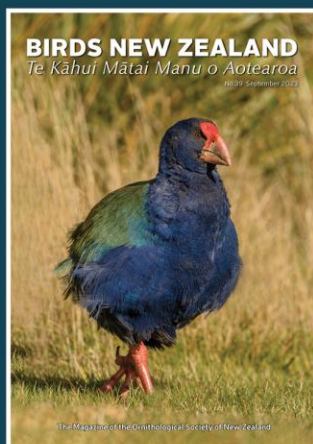
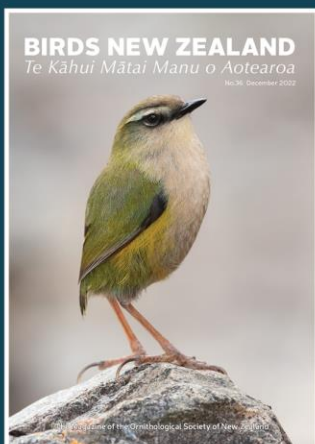
Regional recorder: Neill Haggarty

email: iolaandneill@inspire.net.nz

Please report interesting bird sightings to Neill

Wader count coordinator: Phil Battley

email: p.battley@massey.ac.nz



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It costs \$90 a year, and for students it's just \$45 a year:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/donate/>

JOIN US NOW OR DONATE