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Otago Region Newsletter 3/2025

March 2025



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

Ornithological Snippets

More **Weka** have been around Dunedin, with the latest in Signal Hill Road in early March. The long-staying **Australasian Little Grebe** at Diamond Lake near Wanaka was reported on 4 and 17 March, and a **Black-fronted Dotterel** was at Smaill's Beach on 2 March.

A **Long-tailed Skua** was seen on a Monarch cruise on 12 March, while a **Pomarine Skua** was observed chasing **White-fronted Terns** at Katiki Point on 4 March. **Black-fronted Terns** were seen regularly over Balclutha at dusk during most of February, along with **Black-billed Gulls**. A **Mottled Petrel** was seen from Taiaroa Head 12 March

2 **Royal Spoonbill** flew high over Balclutha on 28 February, with a single bird seen by the nearby lagoons on 10 March. A further **Little Black Shag** was

reported at Diamond Lake 4 March, and finally an **Eastern Rosella** was at Glenpark on 2 March

Please send any interesting reports to cluthaphotos@gmail.com

Richard Schofield

eBird News

In case anyone needs an incentive for submitting more eBird checklists, all eBirders who submit more than 1000 complete checklists in 2025 will receive complimentary access to Birds of the World in 2026.

Birds of the World is a fully collaborative ornithological platform that brings together content from several works of ornithology, together with observations from eBird and media from the Macaulay Library, all in one place. It is also connected with your eBird account, so for example when looking at a species page there are links to your eBird account and Macaulay Library contributions.

Normal subscription price is \$7.99US per month.

Richard 027 281 8701 or cluthaphotos@gmail.com

BirdsNZ Otago Branch News

Health & Safety



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

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

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

Plan ahead, stay safe while birding everyone.

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

Updates and Messages from the Regional Representative

Bruce McKinlay has taken on the Moulting Recording Scheme Convenor role.

Contact details are available at birdsnz.org.nz/contact/



The March edition of the *Birds New Zealand* magazine is now available:

birdsnz.org.nz/news/birds-new-zealand-magazine-published/

The Wild Dunedin printed programme booklet is now in circulation. Here is the link to the online version: <https://heyzine.com/flip-book/c27f0c9cbd.html>

The events are also live on their website and booking platform:

<https://www.wilddunedin.nz/>

Banded Dotterel Migration

The Department of Conservation and the Department of Ornithology at the Max Planck Institute for Biological Intelligence (Seewiesen, Germany) are embarking on a five-year research project investigating banded dotterel migration and use of wintering sites.

They began fieldwork in the recent breeding season, banding approximately 280 adult banded dotterels (as well as some chicks) with either colour bands or 2-character, white alphanumeric flags. Some birds also received a PTT or GPS tracking device.



Examples of tagged Banded Dotterels with colour-bands (left, female "RB-RL") or an engraved leg-flag (right, male "5K").

They would love the help of Birds NZ members who are out and about birding (locally or on holiday) to look out for marked banded dotterels.

If anyone sees a marked banded dotterel, please could they give us a heads up by emailing b.dot.resighting@doc.govt.nz with details of the marked bird they saw, the location and the time and date.

More details in the March issue of the *Birds New Zealand* magazine.

Outside Orokonui Robin Project: Season Summary 2024/5

Our eighth and possibly last kakaruai monitoring season broke some records. Every fortnight between August and December, a fantastic group of 25 volunteers generously volunteered their time (and, I'd like to think, had fun) to locate robins and their nests at our study site outside the ecosanctuary. The enthusiastic team consisted of both returning and new members, and thanks to their efforts, we successfully monitored 8 robin pairs and discovered a total of 19 nests – the highest number of pairs and twice as many. Unfortunately, nest survival was low.

Number of territories

We recorded 24 territories in the 2024/5 season, below the 30 plus territories we have estimated in recent years, and there did seem to be fewer robins around this year – or possibly they were quieter and better at keeping themselves hidden.



Fledgling
Photo credit: Brian Hyland

Nest survival

We followed between 1 – 3 nest attempts for each robin pair. The first nest of the season was being incubated by 31 August and the latest nest fledged on 20 January. Nests were built in a variety of vegetation types (including gorse, kānuka, macrocarpa and broadleaf) and at a range of heights: there was no obvious link between habitat and nest survival. There was a high nest failure rate, with several nests failing by the visit following the one in which they had been found. Of the 19 nests, we could not ascertain whether 2 found during the building stage were ever used, 4 nests fledged and 13 nests failed. The estimated nest survival rate for the 17 nests (using a basic Mayfield approach and assuming nests take 39 days from egg laying to fledging) was 21% (95CI: 9 – 48%). This estimate was similar to our previous lowest level in 2022 (16-26%), and well below the 2021 high of 63%.



Causes of nest failure included abandonment (1 nest) and predation (3 nests – unknown predator; probable rat; stoat). We suspected predation at other nests also but no evidence was found. The stoat predation event was particularly tragic although it was a result to have finally captured a nest predation event on camera. The nest, which had been built in an area of gorse, was the third failed attempt for this particular robin pair. The nest camera showed a large stoat climbing up to the nest in the middle of the day, and over a 5-minute period removing three well-grown chicks one-by-one. The adult birds cleaned the nest between stoat visits.

Banding

We resighted only 3 birds that we had banded in previous years. The oldest of these was a female GY-BM, which we banded as an adult in October 2020. She is a bit of a champion, having outlived two previous partners, and fledging 7 out of the 13 nests that we have found for her over 5 years. This year she sat quietly on her nest only 2m from where I was changing a camera, without seemingly being bothered by my presence, although her stare from just 2m away was somewhat unnerving. The good news is that this nest fledged! Being wary is probably a good trait for robins in terms of their survival but is not so helpful when attempting to catch them using a drop trap. However, our persistence paid off and we eventually caught an adult female on our last visit, allowing Oscar and Elizabeth to gain some additional experience of bird handling and banding. A good result.



This project could not happen without the dedication and commitment of all the Birds NZ who come out to help. Once again this project is most grateful for the support of the landowners Jill Hamel and Ruth Houghton, Nick for keeping us supplied with mealworms, the ORC and Halo Project for loaning trail cameras, and Birds NZ for providing funding. Thank you.

Some time is now needed to consider whether some sort of kakaruai nest monitoring can continue in the future, and to look at analysing all the nesting data we have gathered since 2017. Watch this space.

George Pickerell








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 It costs \$90 a year, and for students it's just \$45 a year:
www.birdsnz.org.nz

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2025 NZ Bird Conference

Registration now open



REGISTER NOW

The 2025 Birds New Zealand Conference and Annual General Meeting will be held in Auckland 31 May to 2 June during King's Birthday weekend.

All events and meals will be at the [Novotel & IBIS Auckland Ellerslie Hotel](#)

Abstracts must be submitted by 31st March. Conference details are available [here](#)

Chatham Island Visit

Greetings to folks who have expressed interest in a Chatham Island visit.

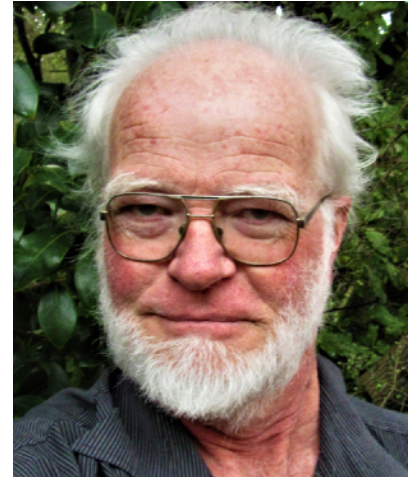
I have booked a Chatham Island trip 28 October 2025 to 3 November 2025. Six nights. Flying out of Christchurch and returning to Wellington. I have had several expressions of interest and there will be twelve in the group.

Good opportunity to experience the fauna, flora, history, geology and geography. We are staying at the Chatham Rise Motel which is a few minutes' walk up the road from the hotel. One or two per room, a central lounge and kitchen area and mostly shared bathroom facilities. Quite cosy.

There is internet, wifi and cellphone

coverage but this can be patchy and drops out fairly often and there can also be random power outages.

<https://www.odt.co.nz/file/lloydeslerenvsouthlandcjpg>



Estimated cost is about \$2,550 which includes the flight to and from the island, accommodation, van hire, fuel and concessions. This does not include your connecting flights or food. I'm not charging a fee but I divide my share of the costs by eleven so my costs – accommodation and travel – are covered. This makes it as cheap as possible for you.

I have been to Chatham 17 times before. Good opportunity to experience a remote part of New Zealand and get a decent bit of exercise checking out the birds, history and plants. It's a bit rugged and you have to like dust.

Proposed programme with a high degree of flexibility

Day 1 Tuesday 28 October Depart Christchurch 2pm. Arrive Chatham Island. To Owenga, Tommy Solomon statue. Dinner at hotel

Day 2 Wednesday 29 October Shop, Museum. To Waitangi West, Port Hutt, Stone cottage, Basalt columns.

Day 3 Thursday 30 October to Kaingaroa, the Point Munning Fur Seal colony, Stone ruins, Swamp asters, Ocean Mail Beach, old flying boat and tree carvings.

Day 4 Friday 31 October Awatotara River Track to the coast. Admiral Gardens and rock carvings. Kopinga Marae

Day 5 Saturday 1 November Nikau Reserve. Emus. Henga Reserve,

Day 6 Sunday 2 November Possible Pitt Island or local alternatives (Port Hutt walk?) Owenga again.

Day 7 Monday 3 November Depart Chatham Island for Wellington. Arrive 10.45am

The accommodation and flights have been booked. I'll be asking for a deposit closer to the time.

Lloyd Esler lloydesler@outlook.com

Programme 2025

Birds NZ Otago Branch meetings for 2025 will be held on the 4th Tuesday of the month (from February to November) in the Benham Seminar Room, 2nd floor of the Benham Building, [Department of Zoology, 340 Great King Street](#), starting at 7.30pm. Please arrive prior to this as the doors lock automatically unless someone is there to open them from inside.

Due to planned roadworks, Gt King Street on March 25, 26, 27th (affecting the section between Frederick and Albany St) the Road will be closed after 7pm and we will not be able to drive to or park at the Zoology building. Please allow extra time to make your way to the meeting.

Tuesday 25 March	Ela Hunt - Exploring the Subantarctic Islands
Sunday 13 April	Wild Dunedin Tomahawk Lagoon Birdwatching 10:00 – 12:00
Tuesday 22 April	Graeme Loh - Prion People of the St Clair Cliffs (Venue is Barclay Theatre, Tūhura Otago Museum, earlier 7pm start)
Tuesday 27 May	Janina Castro - Reflections on Bird Window Strikes in the Philippines
Tuesday 24 June	Jerusha Bennett - Bird parasites in Otago

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

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

Contributions for the next newsletter should reach the editor by **15 April** sodlin@gmail.com

Disclaimer

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