

KUAKA



Welcome to the newsletter of the South Auckland Branch of Birds NZ

Te Kahui Matai Manu o Aotearoa

Issue 65 – March 2025

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You may have thought you weren't going to receive a March issue of Kuaka – but here it is, just a little later than usual.

Two photos from Mike Clark. On the left we have *lunch at Hamilton Lake*.

On the right is *mum and babe* near Tekapo in February.

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday 8th April at 7.30pm.

We have to issue a correction to last months Kuaka. We incorrectly attributed the photo of the Tūturiwhātu whanau at Big Bay – the photographer was actually Sally Greaves. Thank you Sally.



PROGRAMME FOR 2025

Monthly Meetings: held on the second Tuesday of each month, at the Papakura Croquet Club, 1 Chapel Street Papakura. Meetings start at 7:30. Visitors welcome. \$3.00 donation to cover costs please

Apr 8	Monthly Meeting	Louis Santiago from the Conservation Engineering Society will talk about their work
May 13	Monthly Meeting	Julia Kovaks & Rahman Rasyidi – “Fragmented Melodies: exploring bird movement and song in a changing landscape
Jun 10	Monthly meeting	Bartek Wypych will give a presentation on his observations of a bittern nest
Jun 14		Firth of Thames wader census (HT1005 3.0m)
Jun 29		Manukau wader census (HT1326 3.8m)

We will be conducting the winter wader censuses, on the Manukau Harbour and Firth of Thames, in June.

Sue would love to hear from anyone who is able to assist especially if you are experienced in counting large flocks of birds. If you aren't we can pair you up with someone who is more experienced.



Sooo Cute (photo: M Clark)

SPEAKER FOR MAR 2025



Our March speaker was Peter Fryer, the Taranaki RR who has been working as the summer shore guide at Pukorokoro Miranda. He gave an entertaining talk about his Heritage Expedition cruise to the Subantarctic Islands in December 2023.

Apart from the last day sailing back to Bluff, they were lucky to have good weather for the voyage. Peter showed many beautiful photos of the birds and plants that he'd seen. En route to Campbell Island, there were various mollymawks, southern royal albatross, and white-bellied storm petrel

Once there, he persevered with the walk to the top and was impressed with the megaherbs and rata, as well as the number of pipits. Peter was lucky to see the Campbell Islands and Auckland Islands endemic species of shag and teal.

They spent Christmas Day at Enderby Island, and saw large sealions and small orchids, as well as hoiho, tomtit, light mantled sooty shearwater and red-crowned kakariki. The Snares Islands produced the local crested penguin and fernbird, as well as Cape petrel and common diving petrel. Other places visited included Dusky, Doubtful and Milford Sounds, Stewart, Ulva and Pigeon Islands. For those of us who succumb to sea-sickness and may never go there, it was a wonderful chance to see what this region has to offer!

RR REPORT

Last month I enjoyed a week touring Tasmania and although it wasn't a birding trip, I did manage to add 17 new species to my Australian list. There were plenty of birds in the bush, but many are hard to see and I wasn't able to identify the calls. Tasmania has 12 unique species but I only managed to see one of these – the Tasmanian Native hen. Other highlights were a Brown Thornbill, Yellow Wattlebird, Little Wattlebird, and a Yellow-Tailed Black Cockatoo. More mundane species were sparrow, blackbird and starling, which I hadn't seen on my recent visits to Western Australia.

At my local ponds, the royal spoonbill are still regular visitors, with a total of 23 on 12th March.

This month some of our members are counting post-breeding flocks of NZ and Banded Dotterel around South Auckland and the Coromandel. I will be checking out sites on the western coast of the peninsula at the end of the month.

SIGHTINGS

- The Black-Billed Gull colony at Mataitai was successful this summer, with 71 chicks seen on 27/1
- The godwits started leaving Pukorokoro Miranda on 6/3
- A white-tailed tropicbird was sighted at Piako on 21/2 and near Kaiaua around the same time
- Other sightings at Piako include 2 glossy ibis on 8/3, an Australian tern on 9/3, 6 whimbrel and 3 curlew sandpiper on 12/3
- A marsh sandpiper was spotted at Kidds Shellbanks on 2/3
- a common tern was seen at Taramaire on 3/3
- A falcon was seen at Ponga Road, Hunua on 10/3
- A flock of about 100 little black shag were reported flying into Bottle Top Bay on 1/3
- A satellite-tagged juvenile NZ fairy tern spotted at Miranda on 15/3, was then tracked at Kawakawa Bay and Pahurehure the following day
- white-fronted tern juveniles have been seen around the region recently, and there was some discussion at the meeting as to where they might have bred

BANDED DOTTEREL MIGRATION PROJECT

There is a new banded dotterel migration research project underway and we're seeking help with re-sightings of marked banded dotterels.

DOC 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.

Fieldwork began 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.

We 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, time and date.



Photo credit: Noah Siegel

This isn't chocolate, it's a NZ fungi *Gallacea scleroderma* which has evolved to look like berries on the forest floor. Research published in *Biology Letters* (The Royal Society) in January, has found that moa would spread the fungi as part of their diet. DNA and spores from coprolites reveal that the colourful truffle like fungi were consumed by upland moa (*Megalapteryx didinus*).

COLOURFUL TRUFFLE-LIKE FUNGI CONSUMED BY EXTINCT MOA

Mycovores (animals that consume fungi) are important for fungal spore dispersal, including ectomycorrhizal fungi symbiotic with forest-forming trees. NZs sequestrate (truffle like) are hypothesised to be adapted for bird dispersal. However, there is little direct evidence for this hypothesis, as 41% of NZ's native land bird species became extinct since human settlement in the 13th C.

This paper reports that ancient DNA and spores from the inside to two coprolites from the upland moa that reveal consumption and likely dispersal of fungi spores. Contemporary data shows that NZ birds rarely consume fungi and that fungal communities are undergoing a gradual species turnover following the establishment of mammalian mycovores, potentially affecting forest resilience and facilitating invasion by exotic tree taxa.

To read the full paper go to:

Boast A.P. *et al*, 15 Jan 2025. *Royal Society Publishing*, <https://doi.org/10.1098/rsbl.2024.0440>



Image from BirdsNZonLine



BIRDS NZ



CONFERENCE & AGM

AUCKLAND

31 MAY - 2 JUNE 2025

(King's Birthday Weekend)

Join us for a weekend of fascinating lectures and presentations focusing on the study and enjoyment of birds!

Take part in exciting field trips and share the great company of other members!

Full details and registration form at birds.nz.org.nz



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Thanks for reading Kuaka issue #65, March 2025

If you would like to contribute to our newsletter - whether you just want to supply a drawing or photo, or maybe even an article or two – just drop an email to the editor.

Hope you enjoyed the read

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