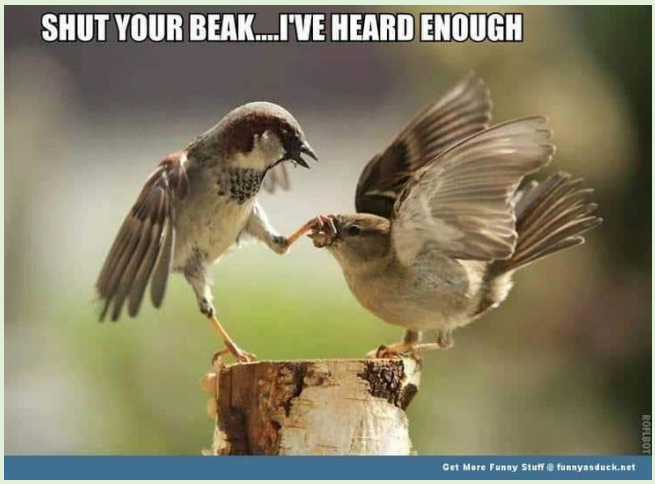
KUAKA



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

Te Kahui Matai Manu o Aotearoa

Issue 66 – **April 2025**

CONTENTS

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Winter is getting closer! Although this is a more unappreciated time of year for birding, due to most rare birds having come and gone, this is a great time to explore the birds in your own backyard, both literally and figuratively.

Checking local lakes and wetlands that are often neglected can be a great way to find rarities.

Who knows, your next lifer could just be within reach!
(Thanks to Young Birders for the thoughts)

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday 13 May at 7.30pm.

This month we delve into the cat problem with shorebirds and have three articles on this subject. There is an estimate of 2.5 million feral cats in NZ in addition to the family pets. There has been calls to include cats in the Predator Free NZ 2050 project, but that has not yet happened.

BIRDS NEW ZEALAND
Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa

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

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.
<u>Sue would love to hear from anyone who is able to assist</u>
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.

SPEAKER FOR APR 2025

CESA, Conservation Engineering Society, is a charitable conservation society, founded in 2023, to enable and develop direct action methods to combat the biodiversity crisis in NZ. Primarily this is done via the use of purpose-built cutting-edge technology. Their mission is to leverage cutting-edge technology to conserve NZ's unique but fragile ecosystem. CESA want to ensure a future where Aotearoa's natural heritage thrives to be enjoyed by generations to come.

The key issues they have identified that impact on the use of technology to enhance conservation management include: cost, difficult to source, hard to get the right tech first time. CESA, by providing industry level technical expertise, aims to provide cost-effective tech that will enable long-term success on a large scale (e.g. a whole island or a large forest block). They specialise in rapid development of protypes testing thereof, and scaling up to leading edge, and effective, solutions.

CESA bring innovation into conservation space by facilitating R & D with an emphasis on emphatic engineering, rapid innovation, enduring stewardship.

We were asked about any problems we experienced in birding. The answers ranged from wet bino's and scopes when it's raining (use the same products that are used to shed water from vehicle wing mirrors), and is there a better way to count large flocks other than by taking photos and using Dot-Dot-Goose – yes, AI is able to count individuals and identify different species …. provided your photos/video are good enough!

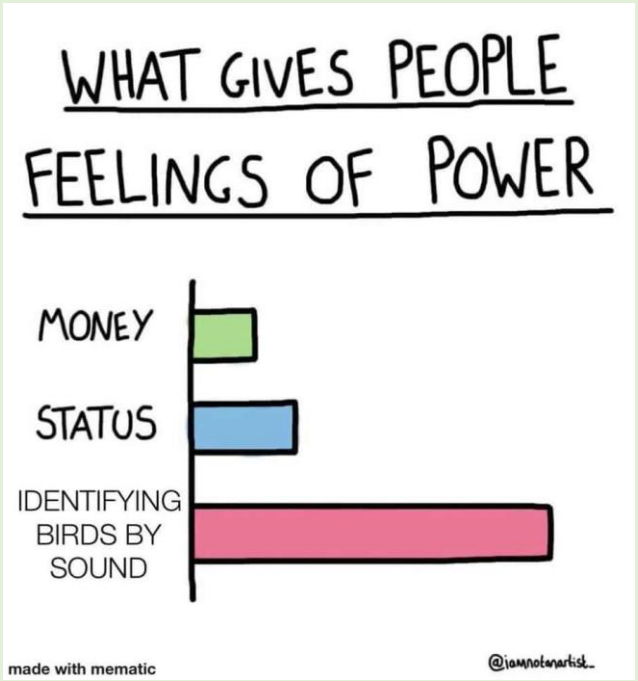
RR REPORT

Spotted doves have been present in my neighbourhood for many years now, but for the first time, I found a dove nest in my garden on 24th March, high up in an acacia tree. I started a nest record and enjoyed monitoring progress, but was sad to find one dead chick on the ground on 1st April. A few days later, its sibling moved out of the nest and hung around in the tree for a few days, but it has now ventured further afield.

I recently had a change of scenery myself and headed over to Coromandel Peninsula to take part in counting of tuturiwhatu/dotterel post-breeding flocks. On the way up the Thames coast road, I spotted a curlew at Tararu, a reef heron at Tapu, and good numbers of torea/oystercatchers and tara/white-fronted tern at other sites. The water treatment plant at Coromandel town is a good place to see a variety of birds, including a large number of pateke/brown teal.

While I focussed on Coromandel Harbour and Colville Bay, several Coromandel residents checked sites on the eastern side of the peninsula. Matarangi proved once again to be the most important site for dotterel post-breeding flocks, with numbers over 100 for both tuturiwhatu/NZ dotterel and pohowera/banded dotterel. Hanamata and Pauanui also had over 100 tuturiwhatu. The only other sites where tuturiwhatu were found were at Pauanui and the shellbanks in Coromandel Harbour. Dotterel have been found at Opoutere and Onemana in the past, but none were found this March.

Happy birding, Sue



SIGHTINGS

- Curlew seen at Tararu (north of Thames)
- A banded SIPO was spotted at Grahams Beach. With an orange flag this individual was banded on the Rangitata River in October 2024
- A godwit with an orange flag over green, this individual was banded in Newcastle in OZ
- Three gull billed terns are present at the Sandspit in Waiuku
- Three arctic skua were present at Matingarahi last week. Seven were seen at Orere Point several weeks ago
- Eight spoonies were seen at Kawakawa Bay
- There is a resident kaka at Waitawa Regional Park
- The white winged black tern is still to be seen at the Wattle Downs ponds. The red-billed gulls seem to have stopped picking on it

- Recently Tony H and his team searched the Firth of Thames for gulls that he had banded in the past. They found a total of nine manu with bands and the highlights included four who were banded in 1997/98 and are now 27ys of age. A further two individuals, banded in 2002/03 are now 22 years old.

Mystery Manu
Semi-desiccated manu found by Tony H 1.5m above the ground in a bush
Any ideas?

Female rifleman at Arthurs Pass. (photo: Paul Francis)

Bittern Conservation - New Zealand
11h ·

Peter Langlands
11h ·

Hello all - At present I am working on some projects to increase public awareness of Bittern and the birds' conservation needs as well as doing field research on the Canterbury population. If anyone is able to donate some funds to my awareness champaign that would be much appreciated. I will also be sending out a monthly newsletter with updates to bittern conservation work in NZ. Thanks all for your support so far too in the conservation of this iconic yet critically endangered wetland bird.
Peter Langlands
Bittern conservation NZ

Account
Peter Langlands
01-0761-0025157-00
Ref- Bittern

CATS AND SHOREBIRDS



OK, they aren't shorebirds, but you get the general idea.

You will all familiar with the Council signage at shorebird nesting areas.

These photos of cat footprints and scat were taken by Andy Sinclair from Waiuku.

Via trap.nz and Predator Free Franklin, Andy is often asked, what to do about cats in shorebird breeding zones. His answer is always to put cages out, and make examples of those cats and their owners, without harming the cat. The response to that is often along the lines of "We would love to, however the cat owners won't allow it".

Andy makes the point that beaches are not a companion cat playground. There simply shouldn't be cats here so cat owners are not a factor. Andy wonders if the detail on the signage could be extended to include the following suggested wording without upsetting anyone, but clearly raising the point?

MORE ON CATS AND SHOREBIRDS

In 2021 Manaaki Whenua/Landcare Research published the following on their website:

FAKE CLUES: USING MISINFORMATION ABOUT ODOUR TO PROTECT RARE BIRD SPECIES

MAMMALIAN PREDATORS PRIMARILY RELY ON SMELL AS THEIR MAIN CUE, ENABLING THEM TO DETECT FOOD FROM A DISTANCE. SMELL IS – USUALLY – A RELIABLE STRATEGY FOR FOOD LOCATION.

Grant Norbury (Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research), Catherine Price and Peter Banks (University of Sydney)
https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/publications/kararehe-kino/kararehe-kino-articles/fake-clues-using-misinformation-about-odour-to-protect-rare-bird-species/

As part of long-running research into the behaviour of introduced mammalian predators in NZ and Aus, researchers asked whether it might be possible to manipulate predator behaviour by using misinformation. Could we use unrewarded prey odour cues to fool predators and make them ignore real prey cues? If we could make predators less efficient at hunting, might we also make them miss real prey?

Over two nesting seasons the researchers tested the response of cats, ferrets, and hedgehogs to false odour cues on Canterbury braided river nesting sites for three species – banded dotterel/tūturiwhatu), wrybill/ngutu-parore) and SIPO/tōrea).

The researchers made odorous pastes from the carcasses and feathers of readily available birds – such as chickens, quails, and black-backed gulls – and tested whether repeated exposure to these odours would affect the predators' behaviours. They set out the pastes at 300 to 400 points across nesting sites every three days for five weeks before the birds arrived to nest, and for eight weeks thereafter during the nesting season. Predators' behaviour was then compared to that at sites without paste. Camera traps were used to monitor predators' interest in the paste, and to monitor the survival of nests at sites with and without odour paste. In the second nesting season the paste/no-paste sites were swapped to increase the reliability of the results.

All three types of predator were attracted by the paste odours, but ferrets and cats, in particular, quickly lost interest after 12–18 days when there were no prey associated with the scent cues. By the time nesting started, interactions with odour were only 5–9% of their initial values. Hedgehogs began emerging from hibernation shortly after the study began so their interest in the odour initially increased, given they were very hungry, but their interest quickly declined thereafter. As a result, when the birds arrived to nest, the predators had already habituated to unrewarded bird odour cues and ignored bird odour, including that of the real birds.

The effects on nest survival were striking for all three bird species: compared with non-treated sites, odour treatments resulted in a 1.7-fold increase in chick production over 25–35 days and doubled or tripled the odds of successful hatching. Protecting nests laid in the first third of the nesting season provided a disproportionately greater benefit because their survival is naturally higher than for nests laid later. For banded dotterels, the researchers modelled the effects on population growth and estimated that this intervention could result in a 127% increase in population size in 25 years of annual odour treatment, compared with population declines with no treatment.

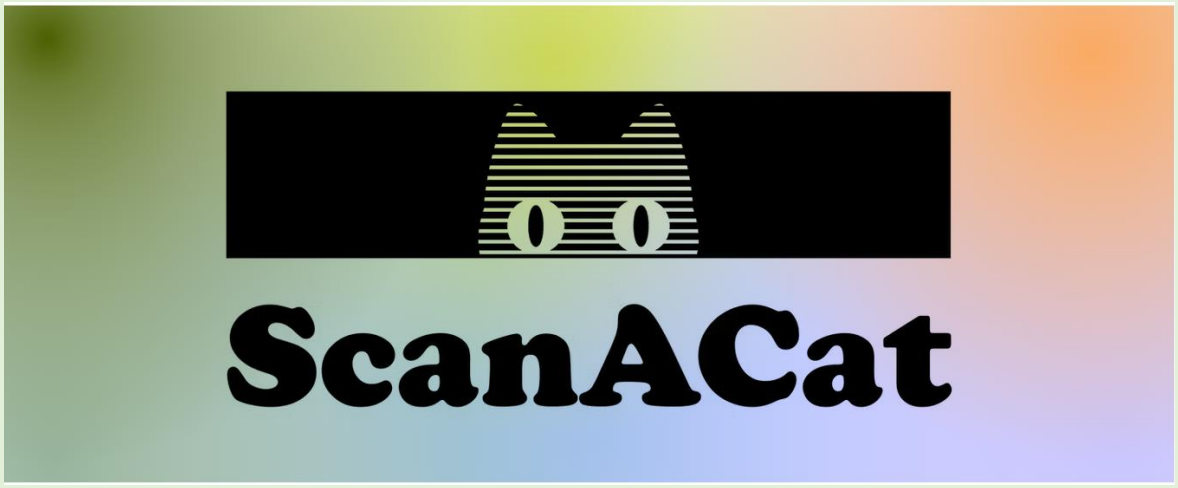
The method would never replace lethal control and is a niche approach best suited to small areas of vulnerable biodiversity where lethal control methods are difficult to implement, or where the social licence to use lethal methods is absent. The method also opens significant opportunities in other countries where lethal control of native predators is not an option.

Lead researcher Dr Grant Norbury of MWLR worked with colleagues at the University of Sydney, Dr Catherine Price and Prof Peter Banks, who developed the idea. Dr Norbury says that this field experiment shows that altering perceptions of prey availability offers a novel, non-lethal approach to managing problem predators, and 'could significantly reduce predation rates and produce population-level benefits for vulnerable prey species at ecologically relevant scales, without any direct interference with animals.'

The full scientific paper for this research can be found at: Norbury *et al*., *Sci. Adv.* 2021; **7** : eabe4164 10 March 2021

Feral cat sniffing the odor paste. Photo: Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research

SNELLS BEACH CONSERVATION – SCANACAT



SnellsConservation.org are developing the ScanACat project:
an open-source initiative dedicated to conservation, and animal rescue.
With basic wiring, soldering skills, and a bit of software knowledge, anyone can create their own ScanACat.

What is it: A device that remotely reads the microchip data of chipped domestic animals.

The initial ScanACat is a proof-of-concept and can be used to:

- Check if an animal is on the lost register (via a rescue centre, council or vet).
- Report nuisance animals to local authorities.
- To see if a cat is chipped without handling or trapping the animal.
- It can be used to see if a lost cat is frequenting a particular area.

How it works: When an animal enters the housing an infrared break beam awakens the microprocessor, the custom RFID reader is turned on, and microchip(s) are read and stored.

When a person wishes to retrieve the IDs, they press a button, join the password-protected access point, enter the IP address in their browser, and download the file to their device.

An individual can then contact a rescue centre, vet, or animal control with the ID of the animal as appropriate based on the situation.

Why it came about: Cats predating protected species where humane live trapping isn't allowed, making a positive ID impossible. In one case, a cat with mange was videoed and rescue centres contacted, but they also were not allowed to use a humane live capture trap. If this had existed and the cat had a chip and was on the lost register the owner could have notified as to the location of their lost cat.

Responsible usage: Users are solely responsible for the proper and lawful use of this device. It is essential to use it legally and conscientiously at all times**.**

Acknowledgments: In addition to the Snell's Conservation volunteers who worked on this project, we acknowledge and thank Shaun Lee for his contributions. A thank you also to Misty, the first cat to test it out.

Build a ScanACat: Proof of concept has been completed; it is currently being documented. Over time as further development is undertaken these sections will be updated**.** A Parts List is available for the original proof-of-concept. Assembly and software instructions coming soon

NOTE: The microchip data is just a number. In NZ only registered authorities have access to the database. See animalregister.co.nz or your council website for information on the registration of pets and who has access to the data that links the ID to the owner.

This little ngirungiru was seen at the Mount Robert carpark near St Arnaud by Paul Francis

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.

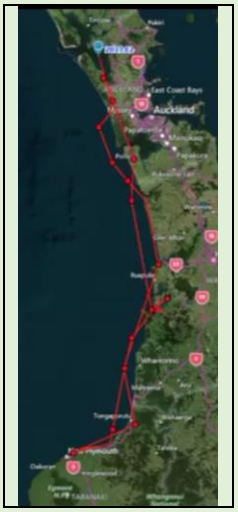
TARA ITI JUV' MAKES AMAZING FLIGHT

DOC have advised that in a series of four flights, a juvenile tara iti flew more than 1700km in the upper North Island.

Weighing just 70gms the young manu covered hundreds of kilometres in each flight, the most impressive being 324 km from Kaipara to New Plymouth on the 21st of March.

As part of the tara iti captive breeding programme with Auckland Zoo, the youngster had been fitted with a transmitter.

Little is known about the movements of juvenile tara iti, making this tracking data a valuable insight into the capabilities of the youngsters.



Fabulous Kahu shot by Paul Francis

After watching this individual sit on the top of a tree for ages it finally spotted prey in the grass below. Laser focused, and not worrying about the old guy with a camera, she dove down and caught her prey

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 birdsnz.org.nz

Thanks for reading Kuaka issue #66, April 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

Don't forget to check out our Facebook page