

Matuku: Birds NZ

Waikato Region Newsletter

May/June 2025



Image by Imogen Warren

Upcoming meetings:

Wednesday 21st May 7.30pm

Topic: The Endangered Fairy Tern

Join us for an engaging evening with Ellen Webb who has been working with the endangered New Zealand fairy tern. Coastal weather can cause big problems for these birds which nest on sandy beaches and already faces huge challenges from habitat loss and predators. Ellen investigated if a substance made from acacia gum (biopolymer)—a kind of plant-based glue—could help hold the sand in place and reduce the risk of nest burial.

Wednesday 18th June 7.30pm

Topic: Auckland conference summary

Join us for an evening where we will talk about the latest news and research discussed at the Auckland conference and other conference highlights.

Both meetings at 5 Northway Street, Te Rapa at the DOC building. Press the buzzer to get entry or as a last resort ring 021 2032982. Non-members welcome.

Have you ever tried attending our annual conference?

If you have never been to a Birds NZ conference before you are missing out on the opportunity to be in a room with the biggest birding names in the country. It is in Auckland this year May 31st-June 2nd so why not dip your toes in and experience the conference? You can [register](#) for a single day to try it out. The conference consists of 15 minute presentations by wide variety of people many are academics and students. Monday has some interesting trips in the Auckland region So why attend a conference?

- Broaden your knowledge on the bird world.
- Connect with people & find out about birding in their region.
- The trip events on the Monday are often a highlight where you get to experience the best of birding in the region the conference is in.

Upcoming Events

Next meetings

- **May 21st** Fairy terns
- **June 18th** Conference highlights

Upcoming trips

- **May 3rd** Kiwi encounter at night at Maungatautari
- **May 10th** Global Big Day Out - unite with the international birding community
- **May 11th and June 8th** Hamilton Lake Census
- **June 14th-15th** harbour census for migratory birds

eBird

The Cornell Lab 
Merlin[®]

Regional newsletters

Interested to know what is happening in other parts of the country? Read the other regional newsletters [here](#)

Petrel Station pelagic ocean tours

20% off [Petrel Station](#) autumn and winter tours. These tours are a brilliant opportunity to see a number of seabirds species.

Travelling overseas and wanting to contact local birders?

It has come to our attention that [birdingpal.org](#) connects people wanting to connect with local birders. There is a US\$10 joining fee but considering the cost of paying for professional birders it will be worth the joining fee.

March meeting recap - birding technology

Jesse Golden gave a very useful talk on the technology we can use when birding as bird guide books are becoming less popular. If you are not using these tools it's worth trying them.

Merlin: allows you to download a regions or countries birdlist. Useful for in NZ or when travelling. It can record bird calls and it will tell you what it thinks you heard (it has a 40-50% accuracy). He cautioned against using recordings to flush birds out as this is not ethical and causes the bird stress and wasted energy.

E-bird - allows you to record birds you have seen electronically and stores this, allowing you to share with others and a birding group can even add collectively to a list when out together. One excellent feature allows you to search for a bird species and see where it has been seen recently. Wanting to improve your bird ID and call ID? At the bottom of e-bird go to explore and then choose photo and sound ID option and choose the quiz option. You can even zoom in to the Waikato to see who has been birding where recently and what they have seen.

Other possible tools to use are: Sythebill; Avisys; Birdtrack; birdata; birdcast and haiku box.

We also learnt that there are birding stereotypes with the USA birder image of retired ladies monitoring their bird feeders; in Asia bird photography and competitions are huge and in the UK feeders are important and 'twitchers' are those who drop everything to see a new bird species but lose interest once spotting it.

April meeting recap - members show and tell

A number of members shared photos and stories about their birding experiences. Deborah talked about her time as the hihi/stitchbird ranger on Tiritiri Matangi and her daily task to ensure feeders had a top up of 13L of sugar water. Barry talked about the wealth of data he has collected over decades of Hamilton Lake monthly bird counts. Abi shared her photos of her trip to Rangitoto to see one of the rarest shorebirds in the world - the NZ shore plover (despite a bright orange beak they are masters of camouflage says Abi). Jeanette showed a photodiary of a thrush nest and the development of the chicks plus some photos of the August 2024 bittern trip. The format was a success and we will be repeating it again next year.

New Members

At the April meeting it was lovely to meet 3 members who have recently joined. Since our last newsletter we welcome the following new members to Waikato Birds NZ: Jonny Mackenzie, Megan Clemance and Antoinette Ratcliffe. We look forward to seeing you at our meetings and trips.

March Trip Report - Miranda

Our March trip to Miranda was an opportunity to see the migratory birds before they took off to the arctic for the northern hemisphere breeding season. Many of the godwits and red knots had changed colour so they will blend into the arctic vegetation when sitting on nests. We also had the opportunity to meet the Birds NZ president Natile Forsdick while visiting one of the hides. Natile lives in Auckland so it was a good opportunity for her to learn more about Birds Waikato and what we do.

April Trip Report - Miranda Bird ID Course



9 people attended the April wader ID course. Keith Woodley entertained us while pointing out different features of birds we see on our harbours, some which are hard to identify. We then looked at different counting techniques and got to put it all into practice at the Miranda hides. We have electronic copies of the wader identification guideline notes to send to interested members. Send requests to birdsnzwaikato@gmail.com

Understanding Bird Moult - Resources

Understanding bird moulting helps us identify the age of a bird and know when different species moult as some species are very vulnerable during their moulting period. For many New Zealand birds, we have very little information on their moulting cycle despite the Society having started collecting moulting information since 1981. Learn more about moulting from the recent online moult workshop resources that have now been made available online for all to learn from [here](#) and [here](#).

Regional Representative (RR) Confirmed for 2026

At the April meeting it was confirmed that Jeanette Brooker will continue to hold the role of regional Representative (RR) (which is like a chairperson) for the rest of 2025 and 2026.

Hamilton Lake Monthly Survey Results

Barry reports dabchick were seen at Hamilton Lake in April. Other birds were acting like the duck shooting season had already started with nervous duck behaviour and over 800 Canada geese counted. Some birds are behaving like it is spring with ducks exhibiting mating rituals and pukeko running around with nest building materials. All 4 shag species were in evidence and the lake is a good place to go if you want to practice your shag identification skills. All welcome to assist Barry on his monthly walks every second Sunday of the month 10am. Next walks Sunday May 11th and Sunday 8th June. Contact eurobaz@xtra.co.nz

Banded Dotteril Sightings Wanted

DOC is starting a five-year research project investigating banded dotterel migration and use of wintering sites. If anyone sees a marked banded dotterel, please email b.dot.resighting@doc.govt.nz with details of the marked bird they saw, the location and the time and date.

Wanted to buy

WANTED telescope and or tripod in reasonable condition for the Waikato Branch to buy for census counting. Contact birdsnzwaikato@gmail.com

UPCOMING MEETINGS 2025

Meetings 3rd Wednesday of the month 7.30 pm at 5 Northway Street, Te Rapa



MAY 21st Fairy terns

Ellen Webb on fairy terns

JUNE 18th conference recap

Birds 2025 conference recap and discussion

JULY 16th Kokako populations/ Waikato River and lakes bird surveys

Dr Chris Bycroft, Senior Ecologist, Wildlands Rotorua will talk about the booming Kokako population at Rotoehu Ecological Trust followed by the various Waikato River and lakes bird surveys he has done over a period of years.

AUGUST 20th Birds & Bites Movie Night

Midwinter movie and pot luck dinner. Bring along some food to share and watch a bird themed documentary together. Meeting will start at an earlier time.

SEPTEMBER 17th Have your say

Annual planning meeting for 2026 events & speakers

OCTOBER 15th Birds and Predators - a career retrospective

John Innes, recently retired, will be looking at changes in bird conservation practice over his long career.

NOVEMBER 19th educational opportunities for birders

Come along and find out about the various opportunities to increase your birding knowledge, both locally and overseas. Members will share resources and experiences. Please email birdsnzwaikato@gmail.com if you have any information you would like to contribute.

DECEMBER - No meeting

UPCOMING TRIPS & EVENTS

Saturday 6th May, (back up day 24th May) Kiwi encounter. Here is your opportunity to hear kiwi in the wild at night in the bush. Maungatautari has many kiwi in residence and we have a good chance of hearing the kiwi calling at night. We'll carpool at 2:30pm from Department of Conservation Waikato Area Office, 5 Northway Street, Te Rapa Hamilton or you can choose to meet 3:45pm at Maungatautari's Southern Enclosure entrance. We will start walking up the track at 4pm and sunset is at 5:30pm. If you wish to come please contact Jesse gazelle.golden@gmail.com This trip is weather dependent and may be rescheduled/cancelled. Back-up date Saturday, 24 May. **See below for more details**



Saturday 6th May, Kiwi encounter continued

What to bring:

- Wear good footwear as the track may be slippery
- Wear layers of clothing - we will be inactive for periods of time
- Raincoat and/or warm jacket (will be colder at the summit & when the sun goes down).
- Head torch/hand torch (red filter needed). If you don't have a red filter on your torch here is an easy way to make your torch red [Making a red lens for torches](#) We will have some supplies on hand on the day if you need to convert your torch to a red filter.
- Water, a packed meal or snacks.

Saturday 10th of May - Global Big Day out

Be a part of birding's biggest team! [Global Big Day](#) is an annual celebration of the birds around you. No matter where you are help celebrate [World Migratory Bird Day](#) by recording what birds you see and record it on [eBird](#). Get some friends together or go solo and join this global event.

JUNE

31st May-2nd June Annual Birds New Zealand Conference in Auckland

14-15th June Aotea, Raglan and Kawhia Harbours bird census.

Back up dates 28-29th June. Join us as we count what arctic migrants have chosen to stay in NZ and not migrate and see the South Island Pied Oystercatchers before they migrate south. Contact Jeanette 021 203 2982 if you can help out.

JUNE 28th - JULY 6th National annual garden bird survey

This is not a group event but we encourage members to save these dates and find 1 hour any time over this period and record what birds you see or hear. This is a great activity to do with children. These results are used by Landcare Research to monitor our bird populations. More information and great bird ID photos and bird song can be found [here](#)

AUGUST 24th - Bittern trip

Join us for a bit of bittern spotting down in Marokopa on Sunday August 24th. We were successful in seeing the bittern last year so let's hope we can do the same on this trip. We have limited number of spaces for this trip. Contact Jeanette 021 203 2982 to register.

SEPTEMBER 14th Te Aroha wetlands

Come and visit the Te Aroha wetlands on Sunday the 14th 10am at Te Aroha. This place is easy to miss but is of national significance as this is where one of our members has spotted spoonbills nesting and successfully raising young representing one of the northern most recorded nesting sites for spoonbills. We may also see shovelers and dabchicks. To register and for further trip details contact trip leader Ken 021 141 4269.

OCTOBER TBC

NOVEMBER 8-9th Harbour census

Aotea, Raglan and Kawhia Harbours bird census. Back up date 22nd-23rd November. Join us as we count what arctic migrants have returned to our shores including the amazing godwits.

DECEMBER - no event



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 birdsanz.org.nz



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SO MANY WAYS TO HELP OUR BIRDS



Red-crowned Kākāriki
(Image: Michael Szabo)



Antipodes Island Parakeet
(Image: Michael Szabo)



Orange-fronted Kākāriki
(Image: Michael Szabo)

The Birds New Zealand Research Fund is funding new research on our endemic parakeets to help inform evidence-based conservation management.

You can join us right now for \$80 a year and for students it's just \$40 a year:

www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/join-now/

JOIN US NOW



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