



Birds New Zealand
PO Box 834, Nelson 7040
<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz>

Regional Representative: Dawn Palmer
467 Frankton Road Queenstown 9300
birds.otago@birdsnz.org.nz 0274427348

Regional Recorder: Richard Schofield
64 Frances Street, Balclutha 9230
cluthaphotos@gmail.com

Otago Region Newsletter 4/2025

April 2025



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

Ornithological Snippets

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



The **2025 Conference in Auckland** is approaching quickly, if you have any matters you'd like me to raise at the Regional Representative meeting prior to the Conference, let me know.

Bittern Project (supported by funding from Otago Regional Council)

The Bittern project committee are curating the 2024 ARD recordings and processing the 2023 data following the DOC Protocols. This is a significant body of work for our members. After downloading the SD cards from all devices deployed, the number of sites sampled in 2024 has been adjusted from 90 reported in our January newsletter to 75. These devices were deployed into promising wetlands ranging from the head of Lake Whakatipu, the Matukituki catchment, the Maniototo/ Tairei Scroll Plain and the Catlins. We look forward to sharing more information and results as they become available.

The **Whakatipu Wildlife Trust** (WWT) has been organising regular birding trips led by me and new BirdsNZ member and WWT Executive Officer Anna Harding-Shaw. If you want to join these short field trips, follow the Whakatipu Wildlife Trust on their Facebook page. Seven joined the trip on Saturday, 19th of April to Bush Creek near Arrowtown, where plenty of tui, bellbirds, fantails and a few tomtits were seen and pinging dunnocks were heard. Checklists were submitted to eBird.



On Friday the 4th of April, **Bruce McKinlay** (Senior Technical Advisor Ecosystems & Species Kaimātanga Mātai Taiāo) retired from the Department of Conservation after 46 years of service to Conservation through DOC and its predecessor organisations. The event was well attended, and it was nice to be able to acknowledge Bruce's valuable

assistance to the Otago Branch of BirdsNZ. Bruce continues to support BirdsNZ through involvement in both National and Otago committees. We wish him all the best in his retirement!



While in **Dunedin**, I took advantage of the mild and settled weather and visited Aramoana where krill stained (thanks Oscar) white-fronted terns were seen on the Mole with Spotted Shags, and thousands of red-billed gulls.



I took a Monarch Cruise to see the Otago Shags, Northern royal albatross, white-capped mollymawks, and sooty shearwaters.

The Northern royal albatross chicks could be seen with binoculars on the steep northern slopes of Tairoa Head from the Mole. We then explored the coast from Purakanui Bay to the southern side of Inch Clutha.

If you have a favourite Otago birding spot you'd like to share, please let me know via birds.otago@birdsnz.org.nz

Takahē Recovery

The Takahē Recovery group has released another 33 Takahē into the Rees Valley since the February release making the Rees Valley the second largest wild site outside the Murchison Mountains. They report the Shelter Rock hut book to be rapidly filling with news of sightings. Check out their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/takaherecovery>

Field Trips:

Wawahi waka/ Pigeon Island - Lake Whakatipu: A booking has been made for 4 to 6th July for the public hut. The hut can accommodate up to 10 people. A local boat owner has offered to transport us to the island, but a second boat is required. Hut details can be found on the Queenstown Lakes District Council website. This trip is weather-dependent. If you are interested, please let Dawn know via birds.otago@birdsnz.org.nz
<https://www.qldc.govt.nz/recreation/parks-and-walkways/pigeon-island/>

Catlins - Pete McLelland, the Southland Regional Rep has suggested a joint field trip. A fabulous idea, we are considering the Catlins. Dates and details to be confirmed. If you are interested, please let Dawn know via birds.otago@birdsnz.org.nz

If you'd like to suggest a location for a field trip, please let me know.

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

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

Below are links to the latest newsletters and news.

News items:

e-newsletter March 2025:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/news/get-a-birds-eye-view-with-our-free-e-newsletter/>

Page updates:

Online Moulting Workshop – PDFs:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/schemes/moulting-recording-scheme/online-moulting-workshop/>

Newsletters:

Wellington – March 2025:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/news/wellington-newsletter/>

South Auckland Newsletter – March 2025:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/news/south-auckland-newsletter/>

Manawatu Newsletter – March 2025:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/news/manawatu-newsletter/>

Happy reading!

Dawn

Wader Count June 2025

Volunteers are wanted for a wader count on **Sunday 22 June**. High tide (2.05M) at Dunedin will be at 12.57pm.

Reserve day is Sunday 20 July when a high tide of 1.98M occurs at 11.42am

All members are most welcome to participate.

Please note it is important to observe SIPOs closely. If it's possible record the colour and code of any banded/or flagged birds. Ideally take a photograph

Please contact Maree Johnstone at email: mareej@kinect.co.nz, or phone 027 6609446 to be assigned to a team.

SI Pied Oystercatcher Colour Flags

This is a call for action to actively check all flocks of South Island Pied Oystercatcher (SIPO) to look for blue flags and all flocks of Variable Oystercatchers to look for white flags. Can all observations of banded birds be submitted to:

<https://app.birdbanding.doc.govt.nz/sightings>

As part of a national project to describe the migrations of SIPO in New Zealand, DOC, Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research, Birds New Zealand and Pūkorokoro Naturalist's Trust are cooperating to band and flag oystercatchers at a range of sites. The sites with the different flag colours are described in *Birds New Zealand March 2024* https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Birds-NZ-Magazine41_March-2024.pdf. Anne Schlesselmann summarises the background to the national project in this article.

On 10 March 2025 DOC, Otago Regional Council, Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research and Birds New Zealand undertook a successful cannon net catch to create a marked population of the species at Warrington Spit. Mana whenua (Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka Ki Puketeraki) were involved and supported the project.



Left: Where to look on a SIPO. Right: Blue flag to look for.

PhotoCredit: Thanks to Oscar Thomas

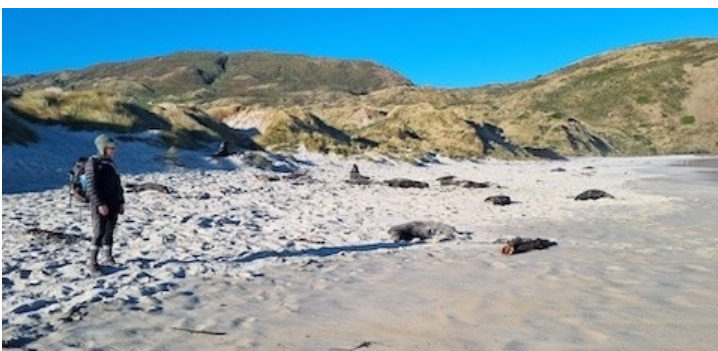
We had a catch of 73 SIPO and 5 Variable Oystercatchers. The SIPOs were tagged with a blue alphanumeric flag on the left tibia. The Variable Oystercatchers were tagged on the left tibia with a white alphanumeric flag. See the photos.

All counts of SIPOs submitted to eBird and the winter and summer wader counts should include a comment on what flags were observed.

Undertaking this work in Otago complements the work of our partners and starts to fill in the pattern for this species in Southern NZ. To maximise the value of this work so far we need to spend time looking through flocks of SIPO and recording the flags and the letters and numbers on them.

Bruce McKinlay

Sea lions on beaches. Providers for birds?



During my daily run out to the east headland of Sandfly Bay to maintain the cage traps to protect titi from cats etc, I pass the unemployed male sea lion community. They do a lot of boy mucking around and making a mess, pooing peeing, vomiting and throwing their weight around. I like to traverse the beach in bare feet but must watch my step. And I have been

collecting a list of birds that seem interested in the tumulus, the sand the sea lions have stirred up.

No surprise seeing red billed gulls but more recently I have seen a white-faced heron attending the lions and a pair of pipits. Variable oystercatchers do not seem to be directly interested in lion spoil but today I saw a pied stilt right beside a lion pecking away. So far I have not seen a bird on a live lion.

About a decade ago several scientists, Bill Lee, Richard Holdaway and others, were extolling the potential virtues of restoring our seabirds to get phosphate onto our phosphate poor landmass. There are probably enough sea lions at Sandfly and some of our other beaches to trip off an ecosystem response. Be a great site to test the hypothesis?

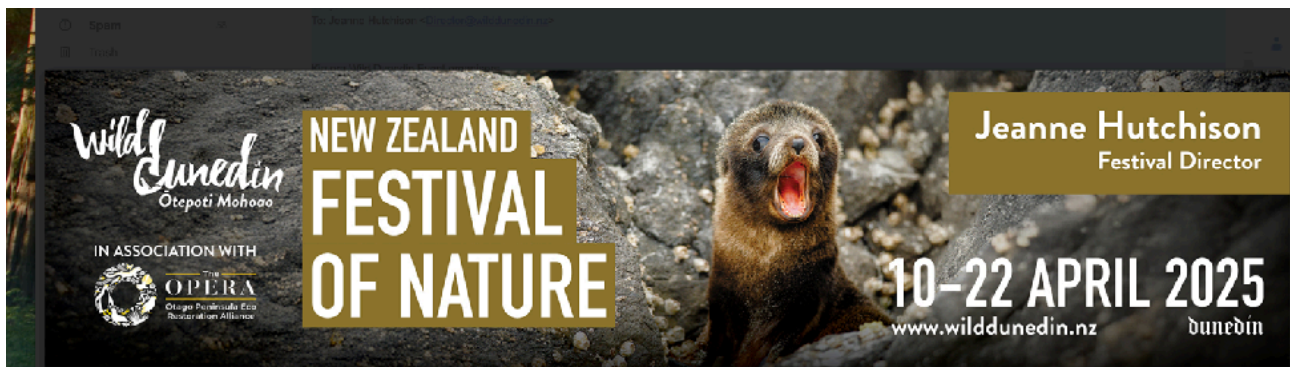
Graeme Loh



Oamaru Penguin Symposium 1-2 May

Thank you to all those who have registered so far for the Ōamaru Penguin Symposium. Planning is well underway, and we have a programme ready to share: <https://www.oamarupenguinsymposium.com/schedule>

Philippa Agnew



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/>

Graeme Loh - Prion People of the St Clair Cliffs Tuesday 22 April

Some confusion has been created by the Festival of Nature booklet saying you have to book for this free event. **No booking** is needed. Just turn up to the Barclay Theatre in the Museum.

Wild Dunedin have set up a carpooling facebook page called Wild Rides - Carpooling for Wild Dunedin. Here is the link

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/960274902987337>

This is a private group, so please share in newsletters, with staff, volunteers, members of your organisations and attendees who have booked tickets via your own ticketing sites. This page intends to reduce the carbon footprint of the festival, help people without transport to get to events and connect the Wild Dunedin Community, so please share widely and offer rides if you can.

Kea return to Aoraki/Mt Cook en masse as possums, stoats eradicated from mountain range



Kea are returning to the Malte Brun Range en masse after stoats and possums were eradicated from thousands of hectares.

(File Photo)
BEN CARSON / SUPPLIED

<https://www.thepress.co.nz/nz-news/360604823/kea-return-en-masse-possums-stoats-eradicated-mountain-range>

South Westland predator free project ‘most exciting’ in the country



An AI predator detection camera within the South Westland Predator Free zone with a satellite box with an automated lure dispenser on the ground.

CHAD COTTLE / PREDATOR-FREE NEW ZEALAND

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/local-democracy-reporting/300845380/south-westland-predator-free-project-most-exciting-in-the-country?>

Tomahawk Lagoon Birdwatching Event 13 April 2025



Wild Dunedin participants at Tomahawk Lagoon Photo Credit: Mary Thompson

It was a cracker of a morning for our annual Wild Dunedin event, birdwatching at Tomahawk Lagoon. A group of Birds NZ members came along armed with spotting scopes, binoculars, guide books and a wealth of knowledge and we set up along the edge of the Lagoon just past the bridge at 10am. There was a constant stream of visitors over the following 2 hours to keep us and the scopes busy, most were locals but there were also some from overseas. Fiona counted a total of 44 people attended the event, including the people who helped, which is a great result.

The water was at the perfect level for a mixture of waders and waterfowl, and we were treated to a close up display of 26 pied stilts | poaka, 1 poaka/kakī hybrid stilt, 2 spoonbills | kotuku ngutupapa, and 20 Australasian shoveler | kuruwhengi amongst other regulars. Will counted the birds during the morning and recorded an impressive 27 species.

The highlight of the morning was possibly when the 2 spoonbill came in close. One of them was quite noisy and was pestering the other one – and conveniently held its wings out so we were able to confirm the noisy one was a juvenile. The adult took off soon afterwards, with the juvenile in pursuit.

Thank you to everyone for their help on the day. It was a successful and enjoyable morning.

George Pickerell

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.

Birds NZ Otago Monthly Meeting Zoom Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83922655184?pwd=QapM32iZ0YWPrKuNYdCKPWwaYS36eg.1>

Meeting ID: 839 2265 5184

Passcode: 633186

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 **20 May** sodlin@gmail.com

Disclaimer

The content and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the individual contributors, and are not officially endorsed by BirdsNZ or the compiler of this newsletter. They do not purport to reflect the opinions of Birds New Zealand.