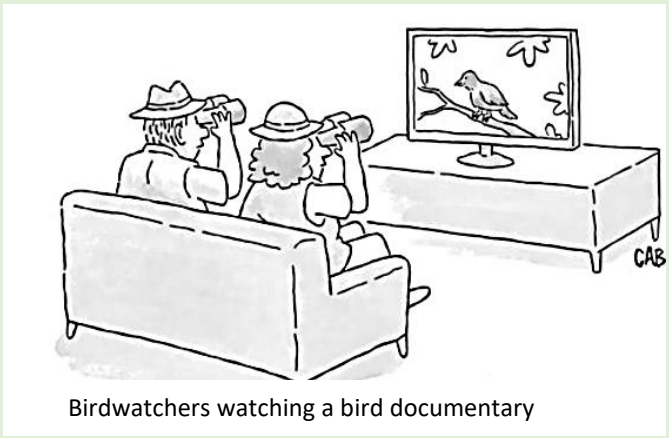
KUAKA



Birdwatchers watching a bird documentary

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

Te Kahui Matai Manu o Aotearoa

Issue 69 – **JULY 2025**

CONTENTS

Greetings *Kuaka* readers, trust you are enjoying the winter weather.

The photo on the right was taken recently near Karaka (photo M Clark). A rather handsome manu you have to agree. For those who may be a little unsure, it is a leucistic *Turdus merula* or manu pango (or, if you insist, a European blackbird). Leucism differs from albinism in that there is not a total loss of colour and the eyes retain their normal colour (an albinistic bird has eyes that appear pink).

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday 12th August at 7.30pm

If you have any suggestions for future topics do let us know. Photos are also welcome.

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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

Aug 12	Monthly meeting
Sep 9	Monthly meeting

SPEAKER FOR JULY

Our speaker this month was Eric Spurr who, amongst other achievements, was behind the introduction of the annual Garden Bird Survey. Tonight, however he was here to talk to us about bird population dynamics following the eradication of mammalian pests, with specific reference to Rangitoto and Motutapu.

Both of the islands have been wallaby and mammalian predator free for 16 years. The result has been that some bird species have increased in numbers, whilst others have remained unchanged, or, in some cases, reduced – a situation that has been replicated several times in other locations.

Five-minute bird counts on Rangitoto have been undertaken since 1990 (pre-removal of the pests), and transect counts on Motutapu since 2007. From the data collected, Eric, and others, have been able to confirm the following:

Tui have increased in numbers on both islands, as have kereru and eastern rosella. Kakariki self-introduced from nearby Motuihe as did korimako. Tieke were trans-located, as were mohoua, pateke, takahe, and tuturuatu. The self/trans-located species are all doing well, with numbers of takahe and pateke being trans-located to other sanctuaries.

Conversely there are several species for whom there has been no increase, and in some cases, a decline. Riroriro have seen a gradual decline on Rangitoto and no change on Motutapu. Piwakawaka have remained unchanged on both islands whilst tauhou numbers have declined steeply.

Blackbirds and song thrushes have seen their numbers crash on Rangitoto but remain unchanged on Motutapu. Both chaffinch and goldfinch are down on Rangitoto but unchanged on Motutapu.

As already pointed out, these results are similar to those experienced at other sanctuaries, post predator control, including Motoroa, Tiritiri Matangi, Zealandia, and the Five islands in the eastern Bay of Islands.

Clearly, the eradication of mammalian predators benefit's some manu species to greater degree than others. The 'old' endemic species (e.g. korimako) who are especially vulnerable to these predators, whilst more recent native species (e.g. tauhou) may have retained some memory of mammalian predators and be better suited to their presence.

In addition to the predator aspect, there is also the habitat preferences of the manu species. Rangitoto is primarily pohutukawa/rata forest, with the predators removed the 'old' endemic species, the tui, have been able to thrive and drive out the tauhou from Rangitoto as they compete for insects, nectar and fruit. The 'old' endemic mohua has been able to compete with the riroriro for the similar reasons.

Eric concluded by asking how long the bird counts on both islands should continue. He feels that whilst the trend has been for an increase in the endemic/native numbers, the time frame, especially for Motutapu has been too short and therefore counts should continue until numbers level-off.

RR REPORT

I'd like to thank everyone who recently participated in the winter wader censuses around Coromandel, Firth of Thames and Manukau Harbour. While we still rely heavily on the experience of long-standing members, it is good to have new volunteers coming along too. Adrian Riegen has been updating the census maps following feedback from those doing the counts, and I am hoping we can have some field trips before the summer census where people can pass on their knowledge of particular beats. This should hopefully make it easier for newer people to step in if a 'regular' person is unable to participate.

I recently received a flyer in my mailbox from Auckland Council, advising of a renewal project at the nearby Tington Wetland (Wattle Downs, Manurewa). This will take place between October 2025 and June 2026. The plan is to remove sediment from the existing stormwater pond, renew the inlet and outlet structures, and plant around the banks. Birds most commonly seen on or around this pond include mallard, grey teal, shelduck, pukeko and greylag geese, but other visitors include shoveler and brown teal. Pied stilt and spoonbill have become regular visitors, both roosting and feeding in the shallow water. It will be interesting to see how much the birds will be impacted by the work. The Wattle Farm ponds on the other side of the road are home to a large number of species of waterfowl and shags. Many gulls and waders also roost here when the tide is high on the nearby Manukau Harbour, but those ponds are too deep for the stilts and spoonbill to feed. Council is having an information day at the ponds on Saturday 19th July between 10am and 1pm, so I will definitely be going along to hear what is planned.

Another wetland where work is currently underway is in front of the Dew Drop Events Centre at Manukau, which can be seen when exiting the southern motorway. Work includes desilting, removal of pest fish and weeds, and combining two ponds into one, and this will continue until next March. This area has always looked rather untidy and I haven't seen many birds there in the past, but hopefully it will be a more attractive habitat when the work is finished.

Tington Wetland

SIGHTINGS

- Tuturuatu seen at Kidds during the census. It carried bands, blue/green white/red. and a transmitter
- A tuturuatu with transmitter was also seen at Te Puru (near Beachlands), its bands were blue/green white/blue
- Harriers are doing aerial acrobatics and calling – when it's not raining or blowing a howling gale
- Three kawau tikitiki near Orere Point
- Nice flocks of finches, primarily goldfinch, feeding on dried grass seed and thistles
- A great knot at Kidds
- Group of 2-3 kaka seen up Awhitu way on a regular basis. Also reported from Pukekohe
- Cattle egrets at Seagrove on census day. There is also a large flock at Piako
- Three matuku have been spotted near the marae near Te Hihi

During the Manukau Census on June 29th, a single, and three pairs, of tuturiwhatu/NZ Dotterel were spotted at Harbourside, near Papakura. The chap opposite was proudly showing off the jewellery you can see. Adrian has filled us in on the background of this particular manu.

"CLH was one of three chicks banded at North Piha one week before fledging on 10.01.18. It's siblings CLM and CLS have not been seen since banding but CLH was seen at:

- Shoal Bay, Waitemata H on 18.04.18
- Clifton Road, Whitford between 08.01.19 and 19.09.19, but no sightings since then.

So great to know it's alive and well. Perhaps you have found it's new home? Anyway, another little piece in the puzzle."

Unfortunately, this is unlikely to be it's forever home; the site is popular with dog walkers, and is part of a residential development!

Continuing the theme of the loss of habitat for endemic/native birds, this is a photo from another sea-side development, Green Park, to the south of Papakura.

The photo was taken from the relatively new coastal walkway and we are not looking at a park, it is simply mowed building sites and empty sections. Along with several spur winged plovers foraging amongst the grass, there were a small flock of torea also busy in the grass (the tide was in and the nearby mudflats were not available). Several of the group found themselves a roosting spot!

So, is this the future for manu who have lost their whenua papatipu/traditional lands?

This loss of open land is representative of what is occurring around almost the entire Manukau Harbour. Will these, and other manu, continue to migrate to Tamaki Makaurau? With climate change perhaps other areas, less densely populated by humans, will become more attractive, such as Hawkes Bay, Wairarapa, the mouth of the Manawatu or Wanganui rivers. Or maybe, just stay in Te Waipounamu!

Birds nested alongside dinosaurs in the Arctic: Fossil find pushes polar nesting record back by 25 million years

PHYS.ORG

Birds nested alongside dinosaurs in the Arctic: Fossil find pushes polar nesting record back by...

Wonder if the tipuna of our summer migrants were amongst the species who nested in the Arctic at this time

ARTWORK AT MANUKAU

These murals have recently been completed near the Manukau Railway station by artist John Crouch. This work tells the story behind the name 'Manukau'. According to tradition, when the Tainui waka sailed into the harbour the crew heard noise and assumed it was people. However it turned out to be birds, manu, around the shoreline. The name 'manukau' is said to mean 'settling birds' (note that other iwi, e.g. Te Awara, may have different traditions for the orgin of the name).

The mural is part of a KiwiRail project to transform graffiti hotspots into vibrant community artworks (source: Kiwirail).

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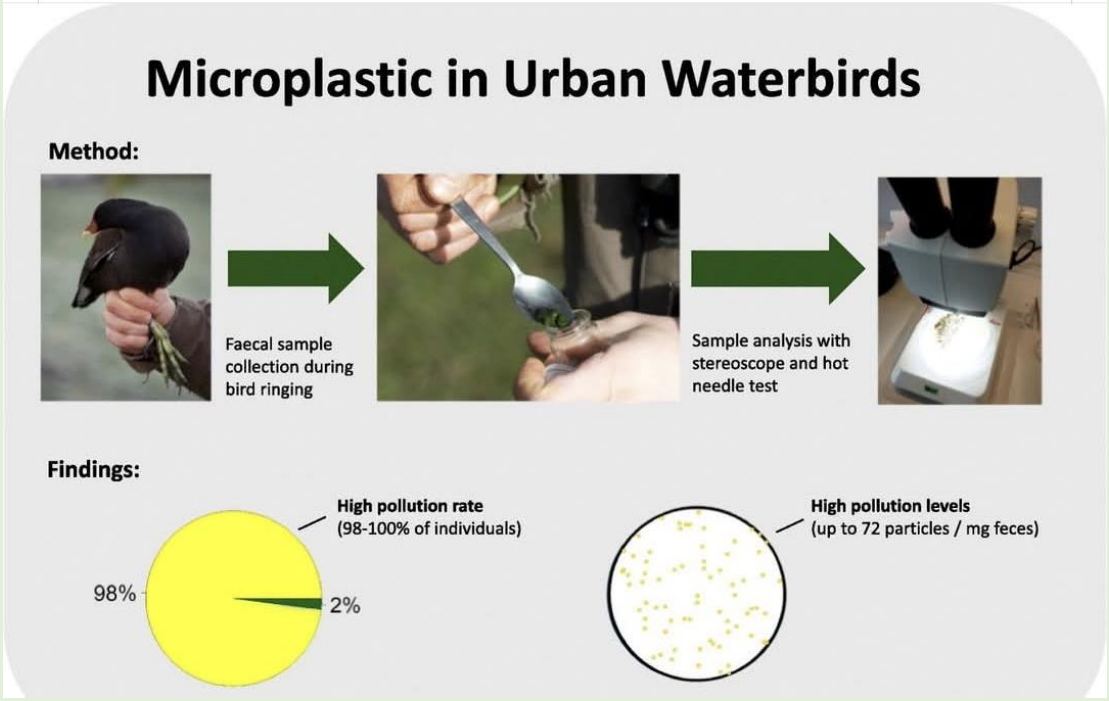

Would be interesting to see what similar research would show here in NZ

Thanks for reading Kuaka issue #69, JULY 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.

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