

THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND (Inc)

OSNZ — Birds New Zealand

birdsanz.org.nz and birdsanz.org.nz/society-publications/notornis/

June 2025



Greetings

Congratulations to our Regional Representative Annemieke Hamilton and husband Jaz on the birth of their daughter Sophie Eileen.

Geoff de Lisle

Wellington Birds New Zealand Monthly Meetings

July Meeting

Our next meeting will be on Monday the 7th of July during which Chris Bell will present a talk about "**Non-native stoats in the Orkney Islands of Scotland**". Chris Bell had the role of Biosecurity Manager for five years with the Orkney Native Wildlife Project, from its beginning in 2019 through to 2024.

As usual, this will be a hybrid meeting, you can join the meeting on **Monday the 7th of July** from 7:30 pm in two ways: In person at the Te Papa Collections Building, 169 Tory Street.

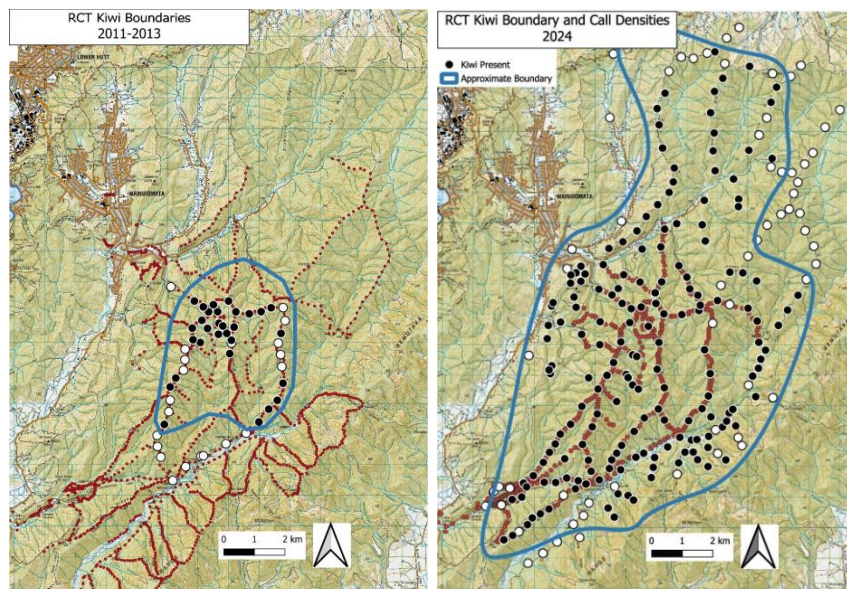
Online via the Zoom Meeting via the following

link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86364235955?pwd=btzmqwpyO7VRS36CIFCzUwiWbklAs.1>

The meeting will start at **7.45pm**.

Recent Meetings

Monday 7th April. **Susan Ellis, Monitoring the spread of North Island brown kiwi through the Remutaka Ranges from 2006 to 2024.** Susan Ellis (project leader for kiwi monitoring in the Remutaka Conservation Trust) presented the results of the latest acoustic monitoring survey measuring the spread of kiwi through the Remutaka Forest Park and beyond. Kiwi were first introduced to the park in 2006, and almost 20 years later they continue to thrive in this large continuous region of native forest. The two maps demonstrate the spread of kiwi between 2011-13 and 2024. The black dots are the locations where kiwi were present and the blue line the approximate boundary. Further details of the kiwi monitoring can be found at



https://remutaka.nz/downloads/Report_acoustic_monitoring_kiwi_2024_lores.pdf. The latest newsletter of the Remutaka trust has a summary of their recent activities, especially the comprehensive predator trapping programme https://remutaka.nz/downloads/newsletters/Remutaker_Autumn_2025.pdf.

Monday 5th May. **Neil Fitzgerald, Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research, Movement of forest birds in landscapes of fragmented habitat.** Natal dispersal and seasonal migration are fundamental ecological processes with important implications for the survival of individuals, population dynamics and gene flow, and thus the conservation of many species of birds. In this talk Neil discussed some research currently underway to quantify the dispersal and other movements of New Zealand forest birds, particularly North Island kākā and koekoeā / long-tailed cuckoo.

Kākā are a winter visitor to the Waikato. As part of a joint project between Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research and the Department of Conservation (DOC) 44 kākā in the Waikato have been fitted with GPS or VHF trackers. Throughout winter the kākā stayed within a few kilometres of where they were tagged. From late spring they moved away, some moving more than 100km. An additional group of 40 nestling kākā from throughout the North Island have been tagged. They stayed near the nest for the first month before moving away to winter in small areas.

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/news/media-releases/2022-media-releases/gps-project-reveals-travels-of-north-island-kaka/>

Koekoeā / long tailed cuckoo are declining and a joint Landcare / DOC project investigates the reasons for this change. Currently, 14 birds have been caught and 13 of them fitted with trackers. While they breed in New Zealand in the winter they migrate north up to 6000km to scattered islands in the pacific.

A part of this study is using genomics tools to estimate the current population size and gene flow between remaining koekoeā populations across Aotearoa. A total of 8 dead specimens of koekoeā have been collected. In addition observation from this project was the finding of a dead pallid cuckoo.

<https://www.birdingnz.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=14161>

How you can help

Koekoeā have an unfortunate habit of flying into windows, especially when they are on migration in spring and autumn, meaning they are often found dead or injured near buildings almost anywhere in New Zealand. Samples from these birds are a valuable contribution to our research – we only need a small amount of tissue, and the rest of the specimen will be made available to iwi or museums.

Injured koekoeā

If you find an injured koekoeā, please phone **0800 DOC HOT (0800 362 468)**, or contact your nearest DOC office or native bird rescue. Then, please let us know too so we can liaise with them.

Freshly-dead koekoeā

If you find a freshly-dead koekoeā, please put it in a plastic bag, freeze it, and contact Neil Fitzgerald fitzgeraldn@landcareresearch.co.nz as soon as possible.

<https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/discover-our-research/restoring-ecosystems/koekoea-quest-uncovering-secrets-of-the-long-tailed-cuckoo/>

Regional Representative: Annemieke Hamilton

Regional Recorder: Peter Hodge peter.hodge@gmail.com

Matiu / Somes Island survey: Shane Cotter, heather.shane@xtra.co.nz

Newsletter: Geoff de Lisle, osnzwelly@gmail.com

Te Papa Blogs



A new bird for New Zealand – MacGillivray’s prion

By: [Colin Miskelly](#) On: 3 Jun 2025

Prions are a group of small seabirds that are very difficult to tell apart. This is part of the reason why it took more than 70 years to identify New Zealand’s first MacGillivray’s prion. Bird curator Colin Miskelly describes how modern genetic methods were used to identify old museum specimens – and to add a new species to the New Zealand and Australian lists.

<https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2025/06/03/a-new-bird-for-new-zealand-macgillivrays-prion/>

Palaeo introductions #2 – The Fossil Preparation Laboratory

By: [William Parker](#), [Felix Marx](#), [Alan Tennyson](#) and [Hazel Richards](#), On: 30 May 2025

For the second blog in our series introducing places, people, methods, and species important to palaeontological research at Te Papa and beyond, curators Felix Marx and Alan Tennyson, along with Researcher William Parker and Collection Manager Hazel Richards, introduce us to the new Te Papa Fossil Preparation Laboratory

<https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2025/05/30/palaeo-introductions-2-the-fossil-preparation-laboratory/>

New Zealand Garden Bird Survey

28 June – 6 July 2025



How to Take Part – Instructions can be found at the following – <https://gardenbirdsurvey.nz/>

In the 2024 Survey, 7,916 counts were received of which 1,167 were from the Wellington/Wairarapa region. Between 2019-24 the Garden Bird Survey recorded in the wider Wellington region a rapid increase in myna (82%), and a show increase in kereru (10%), tui (11%) and fantail (7%).

- **Nationally**, Myna counts continue to show little or no change nationally over 10 years, but for the first time show a shallow decline (7%) over 5 years. There is some evidence that the rapid increase in their counts in Wellington continues in both the long and short term (237% and 82%, respectively).

Note: Analysis of the recently completed Atlas Scheme will provide an interesting comparison to the results of the Garden Bird Surveys.

eBird Oddities

From time to time there are comments raised about what appear to be incorrect sightings in eBird. The accompanying map is a screenshot of a search for takahe, showing a mass of blue markers of birds identified on Mana Island, a known location of them and a single marker on the mainland where they do not occur. However, the checklist is correct and contains photographic proof.

The April 1 date of the observation is a nice touch.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S132329146>



Saturday 1st April, 2023, Stuart View Point, Porirua. Submitter, David Turgeon, duration 1 hour 18 minutes. 19 species recorded including 2 takahe. David's comment and photographs.

- *Seen from Stuart View Point on the mainland using a spotting scope and looking on Mana Island. Were standing on grass path that climbs up the island so were quite easy to spot with the excellent visibility of today. Huge dark blue bird with greenish back, white spot near the tail and red bill visible even at about 3600 meters from me!*



Note. These birds are on the Central Track on Mana Island outside a pen which contains a feeding hopper for the birds.

Bird Snippets

[Common Tern Waikanae sandspit](#)

Submitter - erinaceus, [1,707 observations](#)

Observed: Apr 29, 2025 ·

[https://www.inaturalist.org/observation ...](https://www.inaturalist.org/observation...)

[LU dkcbpDw](#)

[Kaka Hikurangi Street, Upper Hutt](#)

Anonymous eBirder May 1st Appeared in our back garden during very strong southerly storm, was very friendly and flew on to my outstretched arm! Stayed perched for around 2 minutes, flew to tree, then flew back again to arm in around 5 minutes. Nibbled fingers very gently. No rings visible on legs but seemed extremely comfortable around people.

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S231437280>

[Whio in Tararuas](#)

• [ericamb](#) » Sat May 17, 2025

I believe I saw a single whio about 3.45pm today, flying just above me over the Te Whakaturakau stream bridge near Mt Holdsworth Lodge in the Tararuas. Could I be right? BirdingNZ.net

Erica Buxton has just posted this comment about this sighting to Facebook:

"This was my husband and me - it was a solid grey duck flying the course of the river amongst the beech forest" Michael Szabo, BirdingNZ.net

[Banded dotterels, Ration Point, Pauatahanui](#)

Dallas Bishop & Geoff de Lisle, 12th May, 2025

The photograph (below) taken by Dallas was the overwintering flock at Ration Point, Pauatahanui. They roost on Ration Point on the incoming tide. Eventually the tide forces them to move and they depart to the paddocks by Gray's Road. The number of birds in this flock is approximately 30. The flock contains 2 marked birds, an orange banded bird from Lake Ellsmere and a flagged bird PHE marked on Eastbourne beach. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S236729993>

[Black fantail, Kaitoke \(Upper Hutt\)](#)

• [Colin Miskelly](#) » Sat May 17, 2025

There was a black fantail about 1.5 km above the Kiwi Ranch Rd entrance to Tararua Forest Park as I walked down from Puffer Saddle this afternoon.

It is the first that I have seen in the Tararua Ranges, though I saw one at (nearby) Pukaha Mt Bruce National Wildlife Centre in the mid 1990s, and have had numerous sightings in Wellington suburbs and on Mana and Kapiti Islands in the 33 years that I have lived in Wellington.

I am remiss in not counting how many pied morph fantails I see in the North Island, but would guesstimate the number of black morph birds in the Wellington region as less than 1 in 500. BirdingNZ.net

[Coot Waikanae--Waimanu Lagoon](#)

A small number (1-3) of coots have been reported on numerous eBird checklists between February and May. Coots are uncommon in the Wellington region.



Dallas Bishop

[White heron Waikanae Estuary / Waimanu Lagoon](#)

eBird

There have been multiple checklists this year recording the presence of a single white heron on the Waikanae Estuary / Waimanu Lagoon.

[Light-mantled sooty albatross, Sinclair head](#)

Post by [Hamish Johnston](#) » Sat Jun 07, 2025

I saw this light-mantled sooty albatross off Sinclair head beyond red rocks this morning, fairly close to shore. Also saw northern royal, white capped, salvins, black browed albatross and a cape petrel. Definitely worth braving the wind! BirdingNZ.net



Capital Kiwi Project

1st May, 2025 Facebook Post

We're massively proud to share arguably the most significant milestone in the project's eight years. Our first two chicks – the New York Times' front-page stars from December – have made fighting weight. Both kiwi have reached 1.2kg. This is the critical weight at which a kiwi is considered "stoat proof". They have now had their chick transmitters removed and are free to live their best wild lives = they are the project's first homegrown wild kiwi.

In areas with no protection from introduced predators up to 100% of chicks will not make this weight; the stoat is the number one predator. An adult kiwi is a tough, adaptable bird and can live for many decades; with its big raking claws it can fight off stoats and most all-comers, (with the exception of dogs and ferrets). The goal of CK's network of 4,600 traps is to get kiwi from hatching, through the danger zone, to this point where they can fend for themselves.

While much mahi remains to be done, this milestone demonstrates that these kiwi can find all they need – food, shelter, mates, enough freedom from predation – to live wild lives out on the hills. All the bases are in place to build a truly wild population in the backyard of our capital city. What is noteworthy is the rate at which that these chicks made weight: four months as opposed to an expected six months or so. There's plenty of kai on the hills, even during this dry summer.

Our first chicks making fight weight is a huge milestone, especially for the hard-working CK team. Thank you to our iwi, landowner and community partners who have enabled this. Mīharo! Go kiwi!

Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari

A major source of kiwi for the Capital Kiwi Project has been Sanctuary Mountain Maungatautari in the Waikato. The fence at Maungatautari was completed in 2004 and by 2006 the approximately 3400 hectares was free of mammalian predators with the exception of mice. Brown kiwi were first introduced into Sanctuary Mountain in 2005. Over 70 brown kiwi have been transferred to the sanctuary and by 2025 the population had increased to an estimated population of over 2500. Maungatautari has become a stronghold for the western taxon of brown kiwi and a source of birds for other areas including Capital Kiwi. Between March and May 2024, 222 kiwi were translocated from Maungatautari to Taranaki Mouna, Tongariro and Wellington (The Capital Kiwi Project).

2025 NZ Bird Conference

The 2025 Birds New Zealand Conference and 85th Annual General Meeting was held in **Auckland 31st May to 2nd June** during King's Birthday weekend. Approximately 230 attended the conference which was held at the [Novotel & IBIS Auckland Ellerslie Hotel](#). There were two days of talks with field trips held on Monday. Conference papers were presented by Wellington members, Johannes Fischer, Richard Littauer, Colin Miskelly and Alan Tennyson. The abstracts for these talks can be found at [Conference Programme with Abstracts](#)



Field trips were to:

- Tāwharanui Open Sanctuary
- Hauraki Gulf Pelagic [Max 14]
- Ambury Regional Park
- Tiritiri Matangi

Workshops eBird Workshop & Mist Netting and Banding Workshop, Monday 2nd June, from 7am

Photo Competition

The photo competition is now a regular feature of the Birds New Zealand Conferences. This year the competition was well supported with over 100 photographs.

Tiritiri Matangi Conference trip report – Richard Littauer

BirdsNZ had a delightful outing to Tiritiri Matangi Island, on the Monday after the annual conference. The weather was fair, and around ten people took the ferry from downtown Auckland.



The most excitement of the trip was an Arctic Tern immediately after departing, in the harbour, which was identified due to the superbly long tail. However, photos afterwards have not been conclusive, and this was probably a misidentification of a



breeding White-fronted Tern that retained its long tail feathers – a good lesson for everyone involved. Besides this bird, there were other, non-confusing White-fronted Terns, Fluttering Shearwaters throughout the trip in small numbers, Gannets, and several penguins, which were lifers for some of the trip attendees.

A small group attended a walk led by Barbara Hughes down Hobbes Beach and back down the Spine Track to the Lighthouse. On the beach, as well as a delightfully friendly Fantail, there was a male, unbanded Kōkako in some of the Pōhututkawa and on the Taupata. This was a lifer for several trip members – although we had all heard a single bird singing at the wharf, that bird was not seen.

Michael Szabo of Wellington and the BirdsNZ magazine had split off from the group early on and gone to the Nīkau Palms near the Lighthouse, where calm effort rewarded him with 14 Kōkako throughout the day, gorging on berries. This was most likely a significant amount of the islands residents.

Other sightings were expected, but no less lovely: Tūi and Korimako feeding on sap from a Puriri tree, and dozens using the feeders along with Hihi. A Morepork was being mobbed, but stayed out of sight, and the Kohekohe were in flower, straight from the trunk of the tree.

By all accounts, a beautiful, clear day, and good birds. <https://ebird.org/tripreport/381038> eBird Trip Report.

85th AGM

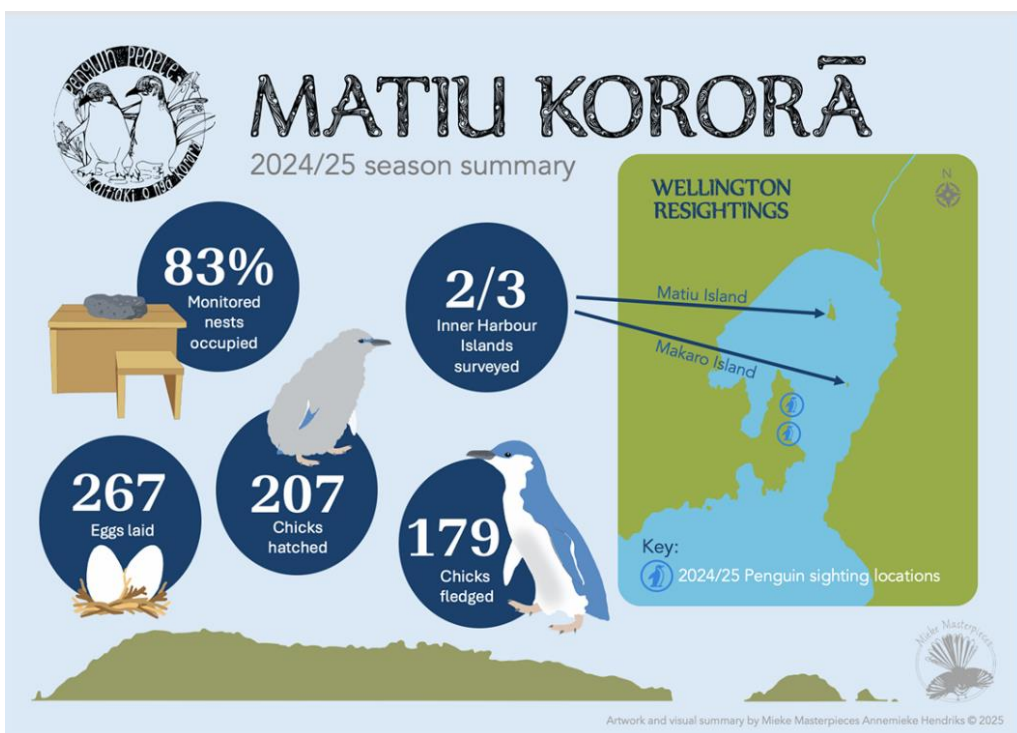
Ian Armitage continues as a member of Council and Vice President and is convener of the Beach Patrol Scheme. Colin Miskelly stepped down from his membership of Council but still remains very active in Birds New Zealand having become the editor of the society’s journal Notornis as well as continuing his roles as chair of the Records Appraisal Committee and the Checklist Committee.

The President, Natalie Forsdick’s report can be found on the following link [AGM Files](#)

Matiu / Somes Kororā / little penguins, artwork Annemieke Hamilton

Access to Matiu / Somes Island was limited during the 2024/5 little penguin breeding season during the building of the new wharf. Each breeding season 176 of the over 230 penguin nest boxes are surveyed every two weeks. The contents of each box are recorded – adults, eggs and chicks. Flipper bands are applied to chicks shortly before they fledge and any adults that were not marked as chicks.

The breeding success for the 2024/25 breeding season on Matiu / Somes Island was similar to the average of the previous 9 years. During this time the very poor breeding success observed in some years in the Korora in the upper North Island were not seen in the Matiu / Somes birds.





Murmuration of 4884 starlings – Mana Island

The above picture was taken at 4.55pm on the 23rd of April, 2025 from the Pond Hide on Mana Island. We were doing an eBird checklist from the hide that included a large flock of starlings - <https://ebird.org/checklist/S251493606> . The photograph contains silhouettes of two birds below the starlings. The silhouette on the left is a harrier while the identity of the other bird is uncertain. One possibility is that it is a falcon. There was a falcon on the island during this time and one is tempted to speculate that were in part responsible for the aerial display of the starlings. There has been a suggestion that starlings murmurate as a safety measure against predators by confusing them with their aerial manoeuvres.

In previous years over winter there was a regular evening influx of starlings from the mainland and their departure back to the mainland in the morning. Over the winter this year the influx of starlings does not seem to have been a daily occurrence. The reasons for this apparent change are not apparent but highlights the value of regular bird observations, even of introduced birds such as starlings.

The above photograph does not do full justice to how spectacular was the display of the birds. The following video was taken by Dallas on her cell phone <https://youtu.be/tQi4gXFcJE>.

How did I estimate the number 4,884? Unfortunately, even in the days of Artificial Intelligence and computer wizardry it was not an easy task. There are computer programmes for counting objects such as birds in photographs, most notably Dotdotgoose https://biodiversityinformatics.amnh.org/open_sourceprogrammece/dotdotgoose/. This is a free, open source programme from the American Museum of Natural History to help with the manual counting of objects in images. There were major challenges in using this software on the above image. In the end I resorting to printing an A3 copy of the image and divided it into 156 squares and then with the aid of a magnifying glass counted each individual square.

Geoff de Lisle

Acknowledgements: Peter Frost for providing some useful advice on estimating the number of starlings, Dallas Bishop for her video and Annemieke for putting the video on You Tube.

Bodies of four weasels found inside Zealandia eco-sanctuary

12th June 2025

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/563872/bodies-of-four-weasels-found-inside-zealandia-eco-sanctuary>

Zealandia Weasel Capture

Last updated: 11 June, “Our solid biosecurity systems have been put to the test with four weasels found dead in traps at the southern end of the sanctuary over the last few days. Thanks to the sanctuary’s robust biosecurity protocols and action by the Conservation & Restoration team, the existing safeguards are working as intended.

On Saturday afternoon (7 June), a vigilant member of the public alerted the Zealandia team to a freshly dead weasel in a DOC200 trap. Duty operations rangers quickly responded, clearing and resetting the trap before conducting a wider check of the sanctuary’s trapping network. Three additional dead weasels have been discovered on daily trap checks since Saturday.

These traps had been set live as part of an enhanced biosecurity response following storm-related damage to the sanctuary fence in early May.”

<https://www.visitzealandia.com/Whats-On/ArtMID/1150/ArticleID/700/Zealandia-Weasel-Capture>

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/524876/dead-weasel-found-inside-zealandia-sanctuary> 12th August, 2024. 4th weasel found in Zealandia in the last 6 years.