



Birds New Zealand
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Otago Region Newsletter 7/2025

July 2025



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

Ornithological Snippets

Maureen Howard spotted a leucistic **NZ Pigeon** | **Kereru** at the playground at Ravensbourne feeding on the leaves of a small broom. Unusually for a kereru, it was just one metre off the ground. Then it flew off to join another **Kereru** on a wire, making a nice comparison. <https://ebird.org/checklist/S259100156>

A previously reported **Banded Dotterel** | **Pohowera** in Queenstown was still present on 20 June. An unseasonal **Arctic Skua** was reported from Shag Point on 8 July. 104 **Black-fronted Tern** | **Tarapirohe** were at the Waitaki River mouth on 26 June.

An **Australian Little Grebe** | **Tokitokipio** was seen and photographed at Glenorchy Lagoon on 8 July. A **Royal Spoonbill** | **Kōtuku ngutupapa** was observed feeding in a flooded paddock at Bendigo 17 June, with another at Andersons Lagoon on 5 July. Single **White Herons** | **Kōtuku** were at Glenorchy 8 July and; Tomahawk Lagoon on 14 July.



During the Otago wader count on 22 June 11 **Sacred Kingfisher** | **Kōtare** were present on a single section of powerline at Hinahina by the Catlins River Estuary.

Finally, in addition to the **Kaka**|**Kākā** at Tapanui last month, one was seen over the cemetery in Balclutha on 26 June, and there were also birds reported from Kaitangata (appropriately) and Kaka Point in early July.

Please send any interesting reports to cluthaphotos@gmail.com

Richard Schofield

eBird News

I have spent recent dark evenings entering checklists from old notebooks into eBird. I won't mention how old some of these notebooks are, but there is a surprising amount of detail in some of the lists, from the days when we used pencil and paper instead of tapping a screen. Unfortunately, there is usually some aspect of what makes a complete checklist missing, in many cases either distance travelled or time spent watching. So most of these checklists have been entered as Historical, but there is still a wealth of information in some of them, and judging from the number of records that get flagged, it is interesting to see how bird populations have changed over the years, mainly down, but occasionally with sightings that were rare at the time, but now regular, if not common.

For some of my early overseas trips, lists were a bit vague, sometimes only a single list for the entire visit, so pinning a sighting to a particular date sometimes took a bit of detective work, including reading through old travel journals, and reviving memories at the same time. Nowadays, although I still try to keep a journal when travelling, it is more likely that my eBird lists act as a diary. If only I'd known 50 years ago that eBird was coming along!

Richard 027 281 8701 or cluthaphotos@gmail.com

The Otago Branch AGM will take place at the August meeting.

Further details will appear in the August Newsletter

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



Our Conference Committee in full conference organisation mode. Branch Members on the Conference Committee are:

Dawn Palmer, Oscar Thomas, Gary Heaven, Bruce McKinlay, Will Perry, Hamish Spencer, Rachel Hufton, Martine Darrou, Georgina Pickerell, Philippa Agnew, Maree Johnstone.

Our Committee Role leads are:

Conference Registration - Gary Heaven

Scientific Committee - Hamish Spencer

Conference Treasurer - William Perry

Catering - Rachel Hufton

Venue booking, local logistics, sound & tech, poster boards, isite liaison - Dawn Palmer

Field Trips - Oscar Thomas

Workshops - tbc

The BirdsNZ Conference 2026 will be held in Wānaka, Otago.

The Venue is the Wānaka Lakes Centre.

The Dates are 30 May to 1 June.

A link to the location of the venue and the link to the venue are below.

Venue location: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/HHDjFj6GB4c4WVXw7>

About the venue: <https://www.qldc.govt.nz/venues/lake-wanaka-centre/>

Accommodation

The **Wānaka isite** is supporting us with secured group bookings at a range of accommodation providers so please enquire with them regarding your accommodation booking.

To secure your accommodation booking, please email hello@wanaka.co.nz or call Wānaka isite at (+64) 03 443 1233 (available 9 AM – 5 PM daily).

A deposit is required immediately after isite confirms your booking.

BirdsNZ Conference Committee 2026

Links to the latest news and newsletters

News items:

Getting ready for H5N1 bird flu :

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/news/our-changing-world-getting-ready-for-h5n1-bird-flu/>

New Council member – Nic Rawlence:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/news/new-council-member-nic-rawlence/>

Newsletters:

South Auckland – June 2025:

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

Nelson - June 2025:

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

Wellington – June 2025: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/news/wellington-newsletter>

Articles:

DMS 2025 – Overview article: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/2025-DMS-Little-Penguin-health-Overview-article-2506.pdf>

2023 PIBCRF article: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/2023-PIBCRF-Tropical-Seabird-Survey-Report-2507.pdf>

Pages:

Contacts: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/contact/>

Society Awards Register:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Awards-List-of-Recipients.pdf>

Faunatech Grants:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/awards-and-prizes/other-scholarships/>

Branch News

Dunedin Town Belt Bird Trail

Are you:

- Looking for a walk in the City?
- Wanting to see some birds which are common or not in the City?
- Wanting to upskill your technique on identifying and counting birds?
- Wanting to get in touch with nature?
- All of the above?

Then I have a deal for you: the **Town Belt Bird Count Trail**.



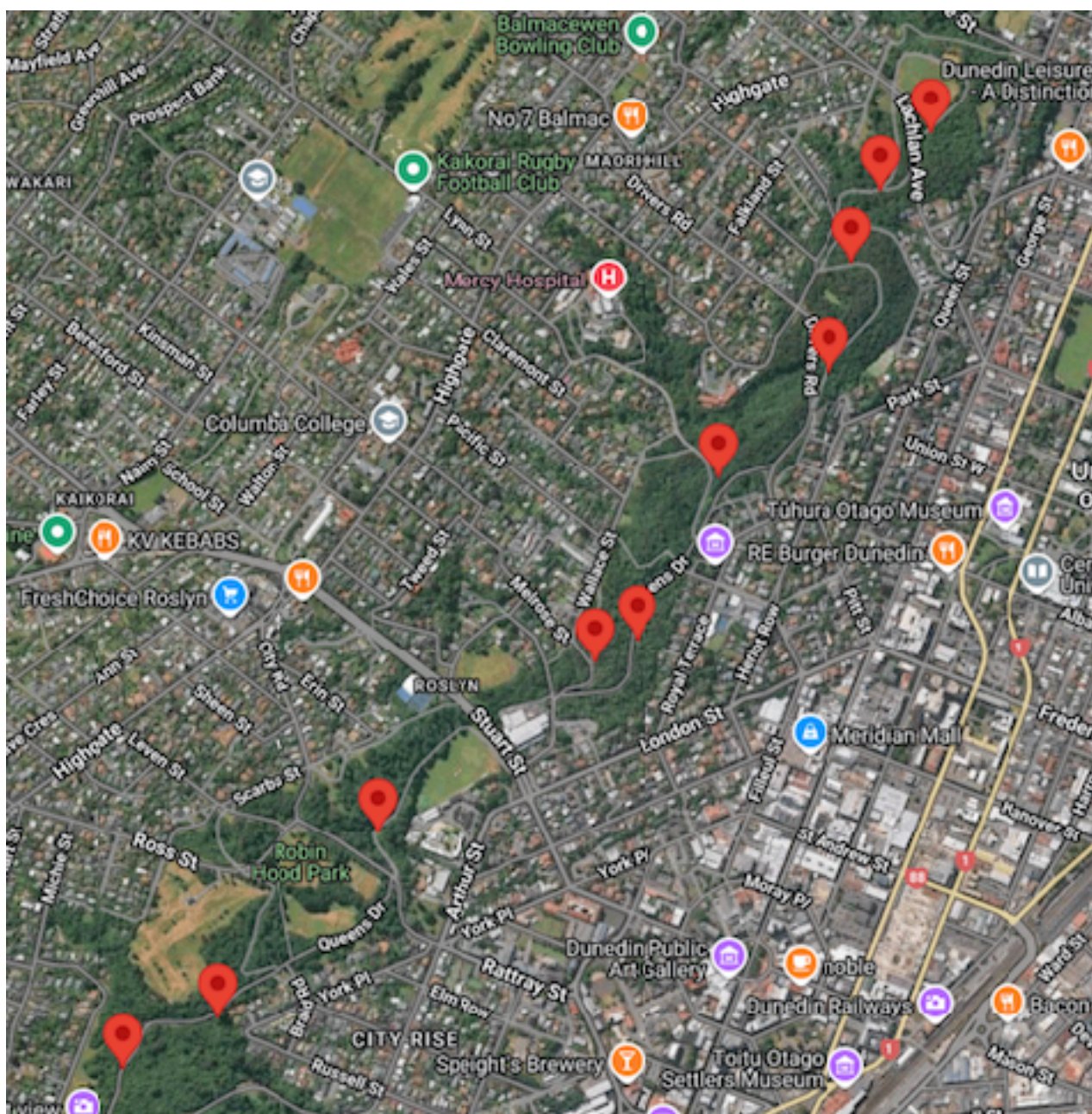
The Town Belt Bird Count Trail is a series of ten marked stations where you can scan a code and get instructions and a template to complete a five minute bird count (or 5MBC in the jargon), submit your observations and contribute to monitoring the birds of the town belt. The trail was first established in 2017 by Otago Region of BNZ and was used by the Region for our intensive Spring surveys between 2017 and 2022. In 2022 a formal agreement was signed as a partnership with City Sanctuary and DCC and permanent markers were installed. Since then the trail has been available for counts whenever people want to go for a walk.

Count Station one is at Prospect Park and heads south along Queens Drive and Count Station 10 is near the Preston Crescent intersection with Queens Drive. Each station is about 2-300 metres apart and clearly marked.

My favourite is Wallace Street (Station 7) mainly because there is a group of brown creepers in residence. Last spring I was surprised to see a pair of kereru setting a nest above the road at Cosy Dell (Station 3). A recent highlight was at Station eight where a falcon was sitting in a macrocarpa. This in addition to numbers of tui, silveryeyes, and rosella's. At the same time there are magic views of the City. The biggest downside for all this is the background whine of helicopters above the hospital.

The trail is designed for anyone and is intended to allow for beginners to take the time to get used to the methods. To facilitate this observers can submit 'unspecified'. So rather than getting distracted from the count you can submit a note and carry on with the count.

As an added twist: with a bit of planning you can do the whole walk by bus. I can catch a number 11 into George Street and then up the hill on a number 15 (or walk up from George Street Normal School). Then finish at the 'bench with a great view' above Jubilee Park, walk across to Mornington and buy a coffee before a 63 and number 10 bus home.



I look forward to seeing you out there.

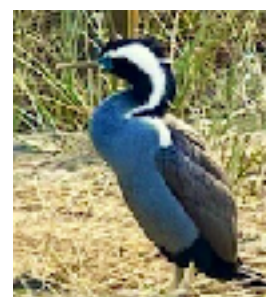
For more information go to www.birdcount.nz where there is information about the techniques and the birds you'll see.

Bruce McKinlay

Calling all the spotted shag lovers!

August is quickly approaching! Let's not miss the spotted shags nesting. Anyone wanting to be fit for summer get your boots and a clipboard come and join us to get into the census mood.

Martine Darrou
darmal@me.com



The foraging behaviour and diet of tawaki in Tamatea/Dusky Sound - Finn Stoneman

Birds Otago Meeting - Benham Seminar Room, 7:30pm Tues 22nd July 2025

Finn Stoneman (Marine Science MSc) will discuss GPS tracking and eDNA metabarcoding to understand the foraging ecology of tawaki in Dusky Sound, Fiordland during the 2023 and 2024 breeding seasons. Dusky Sound is situated in southern Fiordland, an area of tawaki's breeding range that had not yet been studied. Our results provided new insights into the foraging ecology of tawaki in southern Fiordland, the risk of tawaki as incidental bycatch and the potential for resource competition with local fisheries.

Monthly Indoor Meetings run by the Birds New Zealand Otago Branch are held on the 4th Tuesday of the month starting at 7.30pm in the Benham Seminar Room, on the 2nd floor of the Zoology Benham Building in Central Dunedin. The doors need to be opened manually so please arrive early, they lock at 7:30pm. All are welcome to attend! We also offer a zoom link:

Birds NZ Otago Monthly Meeting Zoom Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83922655184>

Meeting ID: 839 2265 5184

Passcode: 633186

Labour Weekend field trip

We will be running a Birds New Zealand field trip to Tautuku, Catlins over Labour Weekend 2025 together with the Southland branch. Tautuku Forest Cabins comprise three cabins, each is for the exclusive use of the party which has made the booking. All cabins are self-contained, with electric cooking and heating. I have reserved the cottage (sleeps 10) and A-frame (sleeps 2) so we have 12 beds available for each night of Saturday 25th and Sunday 26th October. We have the group booking rate of \$25 per person per night for those who take a bed, and there may also be an option to camp. There would be no cost for camping or day trips.

Here are potential optional activities for the weekend (weather will dictate which sites are preferable on the day):

Saturday 25th October

- Morning Catlins River-Wisp walk - Great for mohua, pīpīpī, kākārīki, tomtits, riflemen and fantails. Moderate fitness required. Apart from mohua these species occur at the cabins as well.
- Check into Tautuku Forest Cabins
- Afternoon Tautuku Beach/Lake Wilkie walk
- Evening bittern listening

Sunday 26th October

- Morning Tautuku Estuary walk - Lots of fernbirds, sometimes falcons, kākārīki and crakes.
- Afternoon Tautuku Forest walk - Pīpīpī, kākārīki, tomtits, riflemen. Long-tailed cuckoo may be present

- Evening Irahuka/Long Point walk - Seabird watching

Monday 27th October

- Pack up & tidy up cabins
- Morning visit to Cabbage Point - Shorebird roost for godwits and banded dotterels, cattle egrets and cockatoos nearby
- Afternoon visit to Nugget Point - Seabird watching, shags and falcons

Additional accommodation information:

Our cosy, well equipped cabins set in our large native forest reserve provide a great central base for exploring the beautiful Catlins. Local native wildlife includes abundant forest, wetland and seabirds. All cabins are self-contained with: fridge, cooker, microwave, dishes, cutlery and pots. The Cottage has 2 bunkrooms, each with 4 single bunk beds and 2 sleepable day beds in the lounge. The cottage has an internal shower and an adjacent bathroom with two toilets and a shower. Heating is with electricity (heat pump). Mattresses and pillows supplied, bring own bedding, towels, tea towels and rubbish bags. Guests need to bring all bedding and towels and to clean the facility before departure.

Please contact **Oscar** if you would like to come along: oscarkokako@gmail.com

Field Trip to Pigeon Island/ Wawahi Waka

BirdsNZ Otago organised a Field Trip to Pigeon Island/ Wawahi Waka on the weekend of 4th to 6th July. Nine participants took part in the trip, including four Branch members and volunteers active in local conservation projects, two have been attending the local birding days organised with the Whakatipu Wildlife Trust.

The first three of our party arrived on Friday afternoon, transported by jet boat courtesy of Dart River Adventures from Glenorchy (THANK YOU!!).

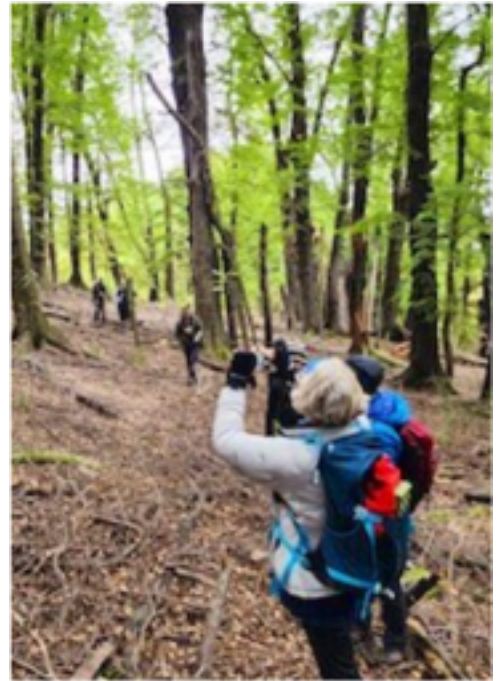


The ride from Glenorchy Marina to the Island on the Dart River Adventures jet boat was a real treat! The hand bars were warm!

We were joined on Saturday by six more, with boat transport provided by one of our group which was wonderful as it gave us the ability to cross to Pig Island/ Matau. Our weather was cold, calm, and clear on Friday afternoon and evening, with low cloud filling the Lake Whakatipu basin after 8 pm. It was overcast under an inversion layer on Saturday, and cleared to a crisp, sunny Sunday with the remaining strands of inversion clouds streaking across mid-slope views of the surrounding snow-capped mountains.

Buff weka were released onto Pigeon/ Wawahi waka and Pig / Matau Island by DOC over a period of about 4 years from 2006 to 2010. These weka were the progeny of buff weka translocated from the Chatham Islands to Te Peka Karara Island near Wānaka in 2002. Weka were seen on both Islands with sign (droppings and fresh scriffing) well distributed along and beside all the tracks. Calling was frequently heard from many sources, day and night. It seemed there may be more on Pigeon Island, which has more areas of open grassland. There were more weka seen, more frequent calling and more droppings and scratchings scattered everywhere on Pigeon Island.

These are predator-free islands, having no rodents, mustelids, possums or cats. The largest Island (Pigeon/ Wawahi Waka) lived up to its name with Kereru seen frequently in the tops of trees swaying as they landed, perched on branches under the canopy or flying over and through the trees. Pig Island/ Matau also had kereru, with just two seen near the south bay. We managed to walk over most of the tracks and spent some time listening at night on the chance that a ruru had taken up residence. One of our group members felt sure they had heard a faint call, but after more than half an hour of listening with occasional ruru playback, it was not heard again. We wondered whether the faint call of a ruru could have travelled across just over 2km of calm, quiet lake water from near the mouth of the Greenstone River to the west.



Weka were found in the red beech forest but a mohua release in the mid-1990s did not establish a population on the islands



Brown creeper flocks were recorded throughout the Coprosma-manuka shrub land and regenerating broadleaf forest on Pig/ Matau Island

There have been past sightings of fernbird on Pigeon Island (3 were seen by one in our group), but despite using playback near promising habitat, none were seen or heard on this trip. The Pig/ Matau Island track is more distant from a large willow-dominated wetland on that island; surveys closer to that wetland may reveal them. Brown creepers were seen across both islands in maturing manuka - Coprosma shrub land with emergent broadleaved forest, and bellbirds were also frequently heard throughout. Brown creeper counts recorded 52 and bellbird counts totalled 55, it's possible that some of the lists recorded the same birds over the weekend.

Only 1 blackbird, heard but not seen, this was recorded on Pig Island when a partial alarm call from a bird flushed within the dense shrub land was agreed to be blackbird, apart from this, no other blackbirds were seen/ heard on the Islands. The Glenorchy Marina area however, supported a large number of ground foraging blackbirds.



New BirdsNZ Otago members, Pearl and Paulina Barry

3 South black-backed gulls were seen resting on and flying low over the lake from the jet boat while travelling between the Glenorchy Marina and Pigeon Island on Friday, but these were not recorded in a checklist that day. Another/ one of the same(?) was seen on the lake from Pig Island on Sunday. Gulls are returning to the Lake catchment!



Dawn with Jess Tatham and Lindsay Jackson at the north end of Pigeon/ Wawahi Waka Island

The trip was enjoyed by all, the weather was superb and members of the group got some great practice using the eBird and Merlin apps. All parties were returned to Glenorchy/ Lake Face Creek across a glassy, smooth lake on Sunday afternoon.

The Trip Report can be found via the link: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/392022>

Dawn Palmer

Wader Count Winter 22 June 2025

	S.Island Pied Oyster Catcher	Variable Oyster Catcher	Pied Stilt	Banded Dotterel	Spur- Winged Plover	Bar- Tailed Godwit
Karitane		13	29			
Blueskin	450	58	69		5	70
Aramoan a	112	28	57	89	1	36
Harbour West	244	22			6	
Harbour East	86	31	15		1	27
Papanui Inlet	84	7			5	65
Hoopers Inlet	14	4	37	27	2	117
Catlins	372	18	102	46	90	56
Pleasant Rvr. Est.	4	8	6	33	18	26
Total 2025	1366	189	315	195	128	397
Total 2024	1193	247	279	143	41	338
Total 2023	594	167	181	129	44	266
Total 2022	1070	111	183	180	162	299

High Tide (2.01M) at Dunedin 12.49pm.

A perfect day for wader counting until approximately 3pm when at Port Chalmers a sudden storm occurred.

Many thanks to all who participated especially Lala, Chris and Zachy who did all of East Harbour.

Interesting sightings not necessarily waders:

- A brief sighting of a sulphur-crested cockatoo in the Catlins.
- Also from the Catlins ten kingfishers on a short stretch of overhead cable. (Do kingfishers flock or was there a super abundance of food in that particular spot?)
- At Back Beach Ann spotted a NZ sea lion/fur seal thrashing an octopus while hopeful black backed gulls swooped overhead.

- 27 bar-tailed godwits counted from East Harbour. Were these seen at Harwood? We don't usually get BTGs reported from here...perhaps it was late in the afternoon and the tide was ebbing?
- 65 godwits at Papanui Inlet.
- 24 black-fronted terns at Aramoana. Also at Aramoana 4 Buller's mollymawk, 1 gannet and a giant petrel
- At Blueskin Bay 450 SIPOs and 58 VOCs. 18 flagged SIPOs (blue flag/white lettering) and 1 flagged VOC (green flag/white lettering) were seen by Nick.



Maree Johnstone



Kia ora koutou,

Join us for some volunteering motu mahi, and/or explore, relax and recharge on Kamautaurua with Quarantine Island/Kamau Taurua Community Inc. **on this Saturday 19th July 2025 or Sunday 20th.**

If you would like to come along, please complete this [Booking form](#) to secure your place and we will be in touch on Thursday or Friday to confirm.

Cristina Barriga

Volunteer Coordinator, Quarantine Island/Kamau Taurua Community Inc.

Phone; 0226968476



Kia ora Bird NZ Community,

Following the overwhelming response to our **2025 Chatham Island Bird Tour** which was fully booked, we're excited to announce that **bookings are now open for our 2026 departures**. These small-group, fully escorted tours are a must for serious birders and enthusiasts.

Accompanied by Ela Hunt, a **Chatham Island ornithology expert**, this immersive 7-day journey offers an extraordinary opportunity to explore the rare and endemic birdlife of the Chathams — many species found nowhere else on Earth.



Tour Dates for 2026:

- **Tour 1:** 22–29 February 2026
- **Tour 2:** 1–8 March 2026

Full itinerary and details here: <https://travelwithlesleywhyte.com/bird-watching-tours/>

Warm regards,

Lesley Whyte

Weka Sightings in Dunedin

Earlier in the year I took it upon myself to collate reports of weka in Dunedin to get as complete a picture of the pattern of weka in Dunedin and to attempt to get some understanding of what's happening and where the birds are. A number of people in North East Valley got in touch and shared with me their observations of weka and this has really helped in understanding what's been happening this year in Dunedin. At the same time, I was given a copy of all the reports made to the DOC hotline and these are included.

I have received a total of 49 individual observations. They can be broken down as:

- one report of a bird at Dundas Street/ Leith stream in 2020.
- March 2024 two reports of a pair of birds in Normanby.
- March 2024 four reports of a weka in the St David Street/Leith Street area.
- July and August 2024 a single bird detected on a trail camera at Signal Hill Reserve (See photos).
- December 2024 approximately a dozen reports from the Cliffs Road and Second Beach track, St Clair. There was a further report in April.
- January 2025 onwards, multiple reports of one or two weka in the Normanby / Signal Hill area.



Trail camera pictures provided by City Sanctuary

So, it's clear that there have been multiple events of weka either being intentionally or inadvertently being brought to Dunedin. We have no data yet about where they have come from or in the case of intentional releases what the motives are. Based on the total number of reports and the distribution of them in the Normanby/Signal Hill area there are currently a pair of weka exploring a large area across the Valley.

Thanks to the people in North East Valley who have shared observations. These have enabled a much more thorough picture of the current status of weka in Dunedin to be described.

Please continue to report any sightings to me and I will add them to my spreadsheet.

Hopefully we can get to the bottom of this mystery by mapping and observing their locations.

For more information on weka, please visit:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/native-animals/birds/birds-a-z/weka/>

Bruce McKinlay 0273891477/brucejmckinlay@gmail.com

Little spotted kiwi found on New Zealand's mainland for the first time in 50 years



<https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/middayreport/audio/2018995829/kiwi-pukupuku-spotted-on-west-coast>

SO MANY WAYS TO HELP OUR BIRDS

Ornithologists are recording bird populations and distribution around the country to inform evidence-based conservation and management.

www.birds.org.nz/whatsnew/g/joinnow/

JOIN US NOW

BIRDS NEW ZEALAND

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ORNIETHA | NEW ZEALAND

ICHIST

29 JUNE - 5 JULY 2025

PEOPLES | PLACES | EXCHANGES | CIRCULATION

Monday 30 June 6:00pm - 7:30pm
St David Complex Lecture Theatre LT01

Public plenary: Historical and contemporary issues in conservation and the environment

Chair: Mark Hanger (Deputy President, Forest & Bird)

Panelists:

- Ruth Morgan (Australian National University)
- Brendan Flack (Kāi Tahu, Kāi Mānoa, Kāi Te Ruahikihiki; East Otago Taipū Committee)
- Catriona MacLeod (Manaaki Whenua | Landcare Research)
- Philip Seddon (University of Otago)

Conservation concerns have been and continue to be at the forefront of environmental research. Come and hear experts in ecotourism, de-extinction, predator-free NZ, fisheries management, sustainability and climate adaptation discuss some hard issues.

www.ichst2025.org

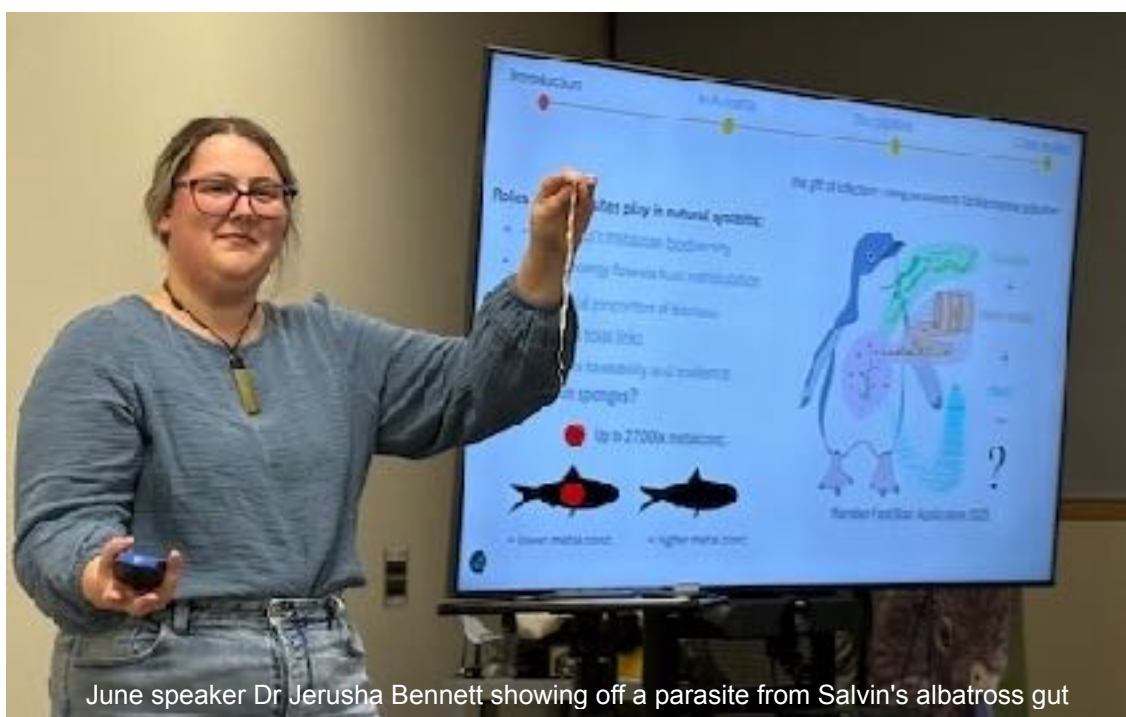
Programme 2025

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>
Meeting ID: 839 2265 5184 Passcode: 633186

Tuesday 22 July	Finn Stoneman - Foraging ecology of tawaki / Fiordland crested penguins in Dusky Sound
Tuesday 26 August	Peter Langlands - Breeding sites and success of Canterbury kaituku / bitterns
Tuesday 23 September	Ellen Hoy - Kuaka / Godwits of the Avon-Heathcote
Tuesday 28 October	Bruce McKinlay - Otago Harbour Bird Survey from 1977-2010
Tuesday 25 November	Annual Quiz Night!

Contributions for the next newsletter should reach the editor, sodlin@gmail.com by **19 August**



June speaker Dr Jerusha Bennett showing off a parasite from Salvin's albatross gut

Disclaimer

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