

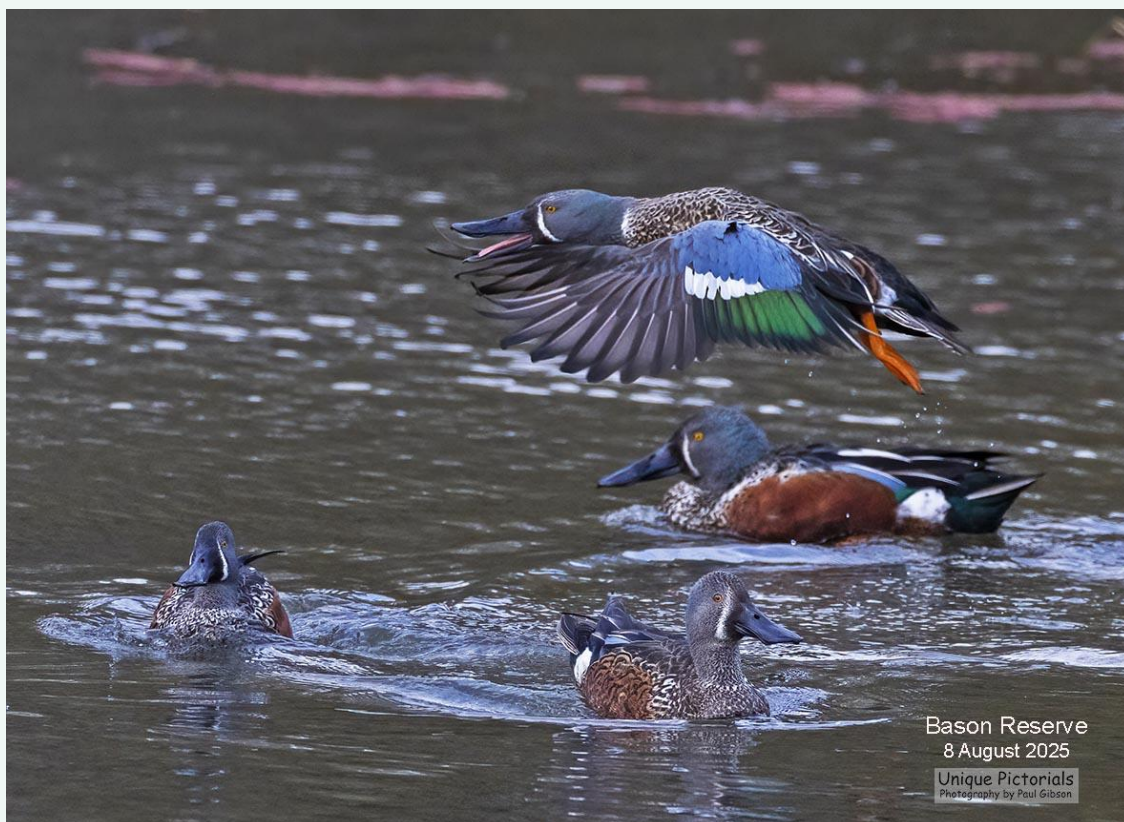


BIRDS
NEW ZEALAND
Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa

MANAWATŪ

Newsletter September 2025

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Bason Reserve
8 August 2025
Unique Pictorials
Photography by Paul Gibson

From the Regional Representative

Spring is upon us. The birds are singing. Soon the migratory birds will return and it will be so much more fun getting out and observing birds.

I personally have enjoyed a pair of Australasian Harriers flying over our house and section, displaying and swooping around upside down.

We have several trips coming up over the coming months. Have a look at the trips later in the newsletter.

I want to thank Phil Battley and Cleland Wallace for running the last two meetings. It is great that you are stepping up when I am away.

The next two meetings are planned, but we still need to decide on the topic for the November meeting. I would really like to hear what you would like. Would you be interested in an eBird refresher? Or, discussion of next years programme? Or, identification of specific birds? Or, maybe you have a topic you could talk about?

Please send me photos and notes about your bird adventures and sightings or other bird news for the next newsletter, on kirsten.b.olsen@gmail.com.

Deadline for the October issue is 25th September 2025.

Last meeting

Cleland Wallace (who ran the meeting) told me that the meeting went really well. Bryony Griffiths gave a great talk about the whole trip to Enderby island. Cleland estimated that there were around 25 people present, which was great.

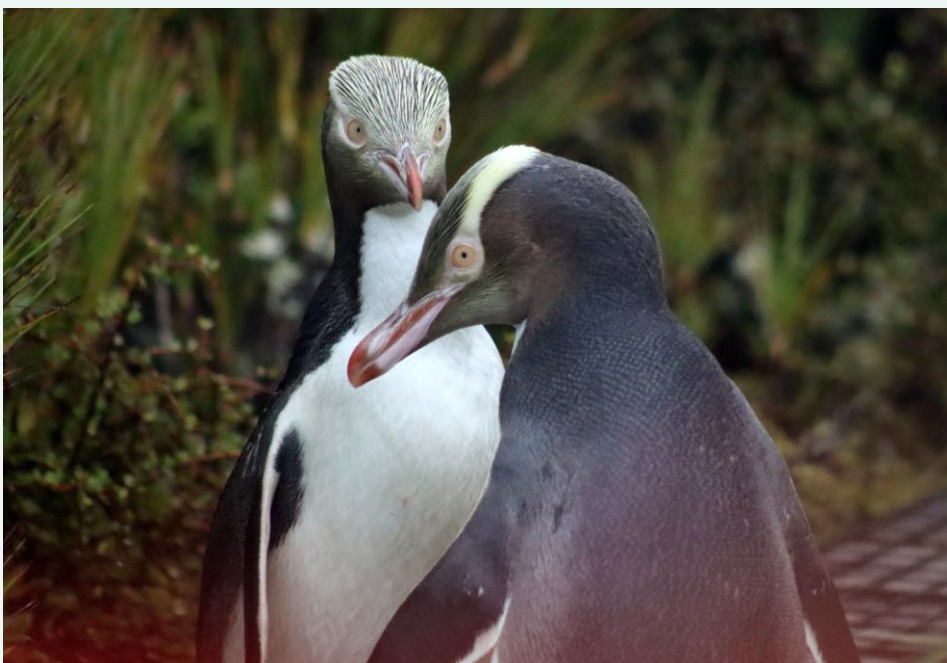


Photo by Bryony Griffiths

Regional bird sightings

Red-billed Gull | Tarāpunga by Phil Battley

On 20 July I popped out to the Dawick Street viewing platform at the Manawatū Estuary around 5 pm, while waiting for fish and chips to be cooked at Mr Grumpys. It was a low neap incoming tide and a big flock of red-billed gulls had accumulated on the mud. My first two counts of the flock were 1110 and 1120 birds, but another large flock was visible flying down the river in the distance around the Fernbird Flat area. They were clearly following the river course downstream, and I counted 260 when they joined the main flock. Another 12 birds came in also, giving at least 1280 birds in total. Presumably they had been feeding upriver in the Moutou floodplain area. I've seen something like this before (from memory in July 2016), so perhaps this is a regular thing? I can't say there were no black-billed gulls in the flock, but the vast majority was red-billed.



Photo by Jeremy Edwards
<https://ebird.org/checklist/S144799644>

Note by Kirsten Olsen:

On the 30 August Stephen and I were driving home from a tramping club tour to Waitarere forest and beach. When we reached the intersection between Main Drain Road and Rangiotu Rd where it crosses the Oroua River at 4:20pm, we saw a large flock of Red-billed Gulls flying to the south west. I estimated that there were around 800 birds. So maybe the large flocks of Red-Billed Gulls comes from the farmland or the Rangitikei River. Who knows?

Black Stilt or a hybrid at the sandspit, Manawatu River, Foxton Beach

Liam Urquhart visited the platform at Darwick St on 12th August 2025 and saw a Black Stilt amongst a group of Pied Stilts. He took photos that showed one or two white feathers at the tail and the face. He discussed it with Phil Battley who decided that it must be a hybrid because of the few white feathers. You can find the eBird check list here:

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S266690660>



Photo by Liam Urquhart

Update from Neill Haggarty

There have been numerous sightings of Black-fronted Dotterels along Manawatu river shingle through Palmie. Most notable was Chris Tuffley's sighting of 6 in one location on a shingle bank under the cycle bridge. He also recorded a Spotless Crake and Fernbird at PukePuke lagoon. There have been lots of sightings of Falcons as well. I actually came across one perched on the railing of the bridge over the Waikawa stream at Waikawa beach! A pair of Barbary Doves was also seen in Foxton township.

Update from Paul Gibson, Whanganui (shortened by Kirsten Olsen)

An update to the end of August 2025, covering the last two weeks. This may be the last for a while, as Jane & I are in Australia for several weeks in September. I do though want to be back in late September to check for AJD (flagged godwit) down at Foxton, to check if he has returned from migration.

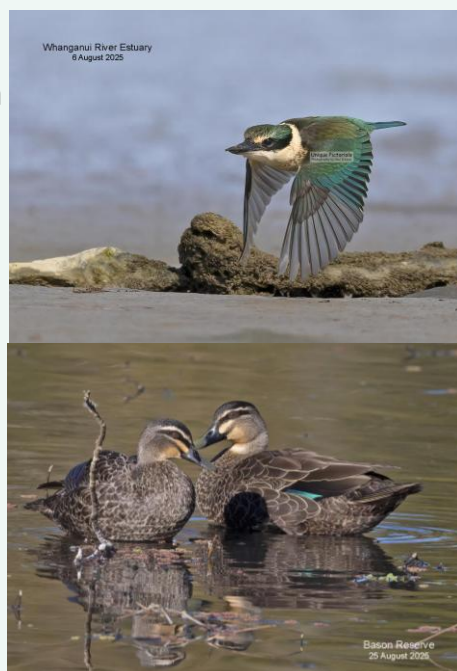


I've continued to check the peafowl along Brunswick Road, with my highest count of birds now being 55 birds, in four locations. One day I spotted, in the distance, a peacock near the road fence. I got close to him, but you ought to have seen how he could run, once he saw me, completely off the ground.

It has been quiet on the Whanganui Estuary, but we expect the first migrant arctic waders to pass through the estuary from mid-September. By this time, the kingfishers will have left – and what a great winter it has been photographing them.

One day at Bason Reserve I found 11 ducklings swimming all over the lake, as if lost. I believe they belonged to a pair of grey-like ducks - see picture. I have not seen any ducklings since, so what has happened to them I don't know.

Jim and I had a very productive visit to Upokongaro to see the night herons on 21 August 2025. Several birds were down on the stream directly behind the café carport and put on a great display for us. I photographed young birds plunging feet-first straight into the water - fishing, playing, and grabbing sticks. Two days later we had a repeat, although a lesser show. In September it will be worth watching for nesting activities, and hopefully, in the same trees as previous years, where we can view them.



Upcoming meetings

Birds NZ Manawatū meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month, **7:15pm in Val Kenward Room at the Palmerston North Community Leisure Centre, 569 Ferguson Street.**

The meetings start with a short introduction that includes updates on regional bird sighting and notices. At the end of the meeting there is the opportunity for all to have a cup of tea or coffee and a chat.

At the next meeting, on **10th September**, **Liam Urquhart** will present his Masters thesis which was on:

Kiwi Vocalisation

The thesis investigated the morphological differences in male and female brown kiwi to uncover possible explanations for the dimorphisms of their calls.



Photo by Tara Swan

Liam has a Master of Science in Zoology from Massey University. This built on a BSc in Zoology with a minor in Ecology, also from Massey University. He has hands-on experience in ecological fieldwork, including kiwi behavior monitoring.

Meeting dates for the rest of 2025

15th October: Oscar Thomas: Western Pacific Odyssey: Long-tailed Mynas and Short-tailed Albatrosses (note that this meeting is on the third Wednesday of October)

12th November (TBD)

Upcoming trips and events

Saturday 13th or Sunday 14th September

Trip to **Bushy Park** (link: <https://bushypark.nz/>) - the best weather day of the two. Neill Haggarty sent me three good reasons to go to Bushy Park told by three good photos (see below). Bushy Park is a fenced 89-hectare North Island temperate lowland forest. It has diverse communities of native and endemic plants and animals. You see some of them on the photos below. The tracks are easy to medium. They may be muddy. We will leave Palmerston North at 8am, so will be at Bushy Park at around 9:30am. I expect us to be back before 6pm. We might make a visit to Upokongaro on the way back (to see Night Herons). If you are interested in participating in the trip, contact Kirsten, latest Wednesday 10 September, on: kirsten.b.olsen@gmail.com



Hihi / Stitchbird



Tieke /Saddleback



Toutouwai / North Island Robin

Welcome to the birds 2025 at Manawatu river estuary

It is very likely that the “Welcome to the birds” arranged by the Manawatu Estuary Trust will be on Saturday 27 September 2025 around midday. Confirmation will follow.

October big day Saturday 11 October 2025

Wherever you are on **11 October**, take a few minutes to enjoy birds and share what you find on eBird. By taking part in October Big Day you're also celebrating Global Bird Weekend and World Migratory Bird Day.



Kirsten Olsen will organise a branch trip on Saturday 11 Oct. If you are interested in participating, contact Kirsten as soon as possible, so we can plan the day or half the day together. Contact Kirsten on kirsten.b.olsen@gmail.com.

Summer/spring Wader count

This year the summer/spring wader count will be Saturday the **22nd November with Sunday the 23rd November** as a back up if the weather plays up. Phil Battley is coordinating the wader count, so if you are interested in taking part, please contact Phil on p.battley@massey.ac.nz.

Are you really seeing a Pārera | Grey Duck?

eBird is trying to get more accurate observations of Pārera | Grey Duck and have posted an article on the New Zealand eBird news page about how to distinguish between Pārera | Grey Duck, Hybrids of Pārera | Grey Duck and Mallard and Mallard. Follow this link to read the full article: https://ebird.org/region/NZ/post/grey_ducks

Here is a photo of a clear Pārera | Grey Duck :



Photo by Serge Rivard source eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S151782584>

In the article they have created a scoring table to assess whether you really are seeing a Pārera | Grey Duck.

The Pārera | Grey Duck needs to have: two clear black face stripes on a cream background, have no white bar on the front border of the speculum, only a faint white line on the back boarder of the speculum, a slate grey bill, a cream nape, a slate grey tail and grey-brown legs.

eBird ask you to add lots of description of the birds if you think it could be a Pārera | Grey Duck in the comment field to make it easier for the reviewers to assess the observation.

Links to other regions' newsletters and other material

Auckland Programme Jul 2025 to Jan 2026:

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

Otago July 2025:

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

Notices

13th Australasian Ornithological Conference (AOC)

BirdLife Australia and Birds New Zealand are excited to announce the **13th Australasian Ornithological Conference (AOC)** will be held in **Perth/Boorloo**.

The AOC will be held from **Tuesday 18 – Thursday 20 November 2025** at the University of Western Australia, with side events planned for the days before and after. The AOC is the primary conference for BirdLife Australia and Birds New Zealand. The largest biennial gathering of amateur and professional ornithologists and avian researchers from Australasia. Key dates will be available soon. Sign up for email updates at <https://birdlife.org.au/events/australasian-ornithological-conference-2025/>

Registration opened 5 May. For more details visit <https://aoc.org.au/>



Dunnock © Chris Tuffley

Health and safety

Please, if you have any incident that could have resulted in injury or results in injury while participating in Birds New Zealand activity, report it to the Regional Representative. In Manawatū it is Kirsten Olsen, email birds.manawatu@birdsnz.org.nz or phone 027 354 6010

Health and safety of Birds New Zealand's members when they participate in Birds NZ organised activity, like meetings, collection of data and fieldtrips, is important to the Council. The [Health and Safety Policy](#) can be found on Birds NZ webpage. Press [Here](#) to get to the policy.

To make it more practicable, the Council has developed [health and safety guidelines for field trips](#) that also can be found on the website.

The guidelines state: *"At a health and safety briefing before a field trip commences the trip leader will describe the route, any specific or potential physical difficulties that might be encountered, and the approximate times for lunch, tea breaks and the end of the trip."* (...)

"If a member has an allergy or medical condition, they should bring their own anti-histamines and personal medications. The trip leader should be advised of medical problems a member has and how to deal with them. Bring a mobile phone and share phone numbers with others. Don't hesitate to call 111 for any incidents involving injury." (...) *"The trip leader should check the weather forecast for the day and, if necessary, monitor the weather conditions during the trip. Turn back if the weather deteriorates. Each member should bring sufficient food and drinking water for their personal needs."*

Photo by Chris Tuffley



Contribution to future Birds NZ Manawatu newsletters

Please send photos and text that would be appropriate for this newsletter, to Kirsten Olsen kirsten.b.olsen@gmail.com .

Deadline for October 2025 issue: 25 September 2025

Please send your contributions to: kirsten.b.olsen@gmail.com

Contacts in Birds New Zealand Manawatū Branch:

Regional representative: Kirsten Olsen

email: birds.manawatu@birdsng.org.nz

Regional recorder: Neill Haggarty

email: iolaandneill@inspire.net.nz

Please report interesting bird sightings to Neill

Wader count coordinator: Phil Battley

email: p.battley@massey.ac.nz

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Kākāpō need all the help they can get. That's why our Research Fund has helped to fund 4 research projects on Kākāpō egg viability, genomics and portable DNA sequencing since 2016 to inform evidence-based conservation.

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www.birdsng.org.nz

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