

Matuku: Birds NZ

Waikato Region Newsletter

September/October 2025



Image by Imogen Warren

Upcoming meetings:

SEPTEMBER Wednesday 17th September 7.30pm

Topic: Annual planning meeting

Join us for our annual planning meeting to set the calendar of talks and trips for 2026. This is a great chance to share your ideas, suggest speakers or destinations, and help shape the year ahead. Whether you have one suggestion or many, your input is valued. Remember we can only offer events if you tell us what you want. If you are unable to come, send suggestions through to birdsnzwaikato@gmail.com

OCTOBER Wednesday 15th October 7.30pm

Topic: Changing bird conservation practice

Join us for an evening where John Innes, recently retired, will be looking at changes in bird conservation practice over his long career.

Both meetings at 5 Northway Street, Te Rapa at the DOC building. Press the buzzer to get entry or as a last resort ring 021 2032982. Non-members welcome.

July meeting recap - Chris Bycroft

We were lucky to have Chris Bycroft who drove all the way from Rotorua to present to us about 3 topics that he has been heavily involved in. Thanks to all the members who made the effort to show up. Chris is involved with the Rotoehu Ecological trust in the Bay of Plenty where the kokako population has had a 14% increase due to the heavy trapping of possums and rats which are the main threats to the kokako. Chris mentioned that the kokoko in this area don't call before dawn but will call up to midday. To learn more about the trust go to <https://kokako.kiwi/> Chris mentioned they are always looking for people to help maintain the extensive rat traps lines throughout the forest. Continued below.

Upcoming Events

Next meetings

- **September 17th**
Annual planning meeting
- **October 15th**
Changes in bird conservation practice

Upcoming trips

- **September 14th**
Te Aroha Wetlands
- **September 14th**
Hamilton Lake Census
- **October 12th** Hamilton Lake Census
- **November 8-9th** harbour census for migratory birds

July meeting recap continued

Chris Bycroft then talked about his 20 years of bird monitoring at Lake Rotoiti which is the best place to see dabchick in the area which are present all year and numbers have risen due to pest control around the lake. The peak season for scaup chicks is December-January. The lake is nationally important for scaup and they are more observable in summer where young have been observed between November – February. Coots are seen more in winter than summer but black swans are the reverse and have a very long breeding season. An interesting fact he mentioned is that pied shag eat young waterfowl!

Lastly Chris talked about the Lakes Ohakuri and Arapuni water bird long term surveys. Very few shorebirds are seen on lakes and rivers and the lakes have more birds on them than on the associated rivers. Some species have a definite preference for their habitat. Black shags and scaup are lake lovers but ducks, geese and swans prefer rivers and little shags have no preference and will be on lakes and rivers.

August meeting recap

At our August last meeting, we shared a potluck dinner and watched Pale Male, an endearing documentary about New York's most famous red-tailed hawk. The film told the story of how in 1991 a rare male red-tailed hawk arrived in Central Park and his successful nesting attempts with several partners within view of onlookers quickly which earned him a devoted fan club. It was a wonderful reminder that even in the middle of a busy city, nature can thrive and bring people together. In the years since Pale Male put his mark on the city and history, New York City's Red-tailed Hawk population has expanded considerably: dozens of pairs now nest all over the city. There are often webcams on nests so you can follow the developments in the nests. Source: [Red-tailed hawks in New York City](#) | [NYC Bird Alliance](#)

Bittern monitoring - bittern need your help

You may remember that last year the Love Bittern project instigated the bittern listening project to identify the male population as they were booming. Last year was a huge success with over 500 people nationwide listening at 462 sites and 223 individual male bittern booming were collectively counted. The count called the Great Matuku (bittern) Muster continues again this year. Interested people are asked to listen out for male bittern booming in a wetland near you. How it works: Groups of 2 or more people are asked to identify a location, get settled at their listening site before sunset and to listen for 60-90 minutes after sunset. By the time will have read this the September dates have passed however please consider volunteering for the October and November dates. For more details please register your location on the website <https://www.lovebittern.com/thegreatmatukumuster> or by email to lovebittern@gmail.com The dates for The Great Matuku-hurepo Muster 2025 are 5,6,7 September 3,4,5 October and 7,8,9 November 2025.

August trip report - a bit of bittern

I was first enthralled by bittern without even having seen one. My grandmother lived near a swamp and as a child recalls being frightened by a bittern that had been stunned by a power line and how aggressive it was with its large beak. Fast forward 50 years and I am still interested in these birds having seen one for the first time last year down Marokopa way. This year we repeated our bittern trip with 2 carloads of people and we were rewarded with 4 and possibly 5 bittern, lots of turkey and one emu! On our trip last year the birds were very wary and spend a lot of time in their defensive pose which is very upright. This year we were able to see them feeding in the paddocks and I was surprised with how low their body is when they are naturally feeding. We also met a fellow OSNZ member from Taranaki also observing bittern and an enthusiastic member of the public who has an interest in bittern. Bittern are in trouble and there is a project to get a census of how many bittern there are - read below for more details.



Bittern by Graham Saunders



Emu by Graham Saunders

Regional newsletters

Interested to know what is happening in other parts of the country? Read the other regional newsletters [here](#)

Increase your bird knowledge - what is a pelagic trip?

For those of you who are unfamiliar with what a pelagic trip is, it is a boat excursion past the coast to see the bird of the open ocean and is favoured by birdwatchers as a chance to spot albatross, petrels, and other seabirds you'd never see from shore. The Petrel Station runs tours from Tutukaka, north of Whangarei and the boat trips for autumn and winter 2026 have recently been released. Scott who runs the tours knows exactly what species you're likely to see in any season when you travel with him. For more details visit www.thepetrelstation.nz

Vote for Bird of the Year competition September 15-28

As some of you are probably aware Forest and Bird has created and run the Bird of the Year competition annually for 20 years as a fun way to promote birds. This year's voting takes place from September 15-28 online at [Bird of the Year < Forest & Bird](#)

NEW BOOK – Bird of the Year: 20 Years of Ruffled Feathers

A recent book on Bird of the Year has recently been published by Forest and Bird and is on the top 10 list of books selling in the country at the moment. The book covers how this event has hatched, the low down about the controversies, international interference and the 'birdfluencers' who have taken this competition to new heights. You may know local 'birdfluencer' Keith Woodley from the Pukorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre who is leading the campaign for the wrybill to be bird of the year. Check out this fun link promoting the wrybill. [Wrybill for 2025!](#) and [One man's mission](#)



Faunatech Grants Available

Wildlife Acoustics is proud to offer a quarterly grant program that supports the advancement of wildlife research, habitat monitoring, and environmental conservation. Scientists may apply for a product grant to advance the study of bats, birds, amphibians, and other terrestrial wildlife—or a travel grant to help them attend a conference with their peers. [Grants available](#)

Hamilton Lake Monthly Survey Results

Barry reports that in the July and August census the birds were mostly hiding away compared to the previous two months. In July there were few Canada Goose in sight and only 9 in the August count. However both months had a good selection of shags - August had five Pied and fifteen Little Blacks. If you are wanting to improve your identification of shags Hamilton Lake, in Hamilton City is a good place to go. All welcome to assist Barry on his monthly walks every second Sunday of the month 10am. Next walks Sunday 14th September and October 12th. Contact eurobaz@xtra.co.nz

Stand to Promote Our Group

The Aspire Community Showcase was an event held in the Hamilton Gardens Pavillion on Friday and Saturday 29-30 August for health, education and non-profit groups to showcase their organizations. Thanks to volunteers Amanda Hassan and Barry Friend for assisting. Katherine Hay provided invaluable help with providing a bird identification game which was an engaging opportunity to connect with visitors, the table and chairs and manning the stall. Special thanks go to DOC for the loan of the kaka and tui exhibits (not seen in photo).

The display showcased:

- bird identification
- the Hamilton Lake monthly bird counts
- educated people on angle wing, a fatal condition when water fowl are fed bread
- guess the nest - people were encouraged to guess which nest belonged to which bird
- Promoted the national bittern muster and the bird of the year competition

Despite all of the work and even a mini book fair by Rotary to draw in the crowds the event had very little foot traffic and was a bit of a disappointment for the money and time spent. The upside was that we won an honourable mention for our booth display and a 5 people signed up to learn more about what we do. Below is a photo of our booth - later added to the booth was a big Birds NZ sign on the left and a tui and kaka in display cases.



UPCOMING MEETINGS 2025

Meetings 3rd Wednesday of the month 7.30 pm at 5 Northway Street, Te Rapa

SEPTEMBER 17th Have your say

Annual planning meeting for 2026 events & speakers

OCTOBER 15th Birds and Predators - a career retrospective

John Innes, recently retired, will be looking at changes in bird conservation practice over his long career.

NOVEMBER 19th educational opportunities for birders

Come along and find out about the various opportunities to increase your birding knowledge, both locally and overseas. Members will share resources and experiences. Please email birdsnzwaikato@gmail.com if you have any information you would like to contribute.

DECEMBER - No meeting

UPCOMING TRIPS & EVENTS

September 14th Hamilton Lake Census

Contact eurobaz@xtra.co.nz

September 14th Te Aroha wetlands

Come and visit the Te Aroha wetlands on Sunday the 14th 10am at Te Aroha. This place is easy to miss but is of national significance as this is where one of our members has spotted spoonbills nesting and successfully raising young representing one of the northern most recorded nesting sites for spoonbills. We may also see shovelers and dabchicks. To register and for further trip details contact trip leader Ken 021 141 4269.

OCTOBER

12 October 12th Hamilton Lake Census

Contact eurobaz@xtra.co.nz

NOVEMBER 8-9th Harbour census

Aotea, Raglan and Kawhia Harbours bird census. Back up date 22nd-23rd November. Join us as we count what arctic migrants have returned to our shores including the amazing godwits. Contact Jeanette 021 2032982 for details.

DECEMBER - no event



BIRDS | SCIENCE | PEOPLE



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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That's \$90 a year, and just \$45 for students.

www.birdsnz.org.nz

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