

Experience at the 2025 New Zealand Bird Conference, Auckland

Attending the 2025 New Zealand Bird Conference in Auckland was an inspiring and rewarding experience. The event brought together ornithologists, researchers, and conservation practitioners from across the country to share new insights into avian ecology, behaviour, and conservation. I was honoured to present an oral talk on my doctoral research examining **flight initiation distance (FID)** in Red-billed Gulls (*Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae scopulinus*), focusing on how human disturbance influences risk perception across urban and rural habitats. Presenting my findings to an audience of field ecologists and behavioural biologists provided valuable feedback, particularly on connecting behavioural responses to conservation planning in human-dominated environments.

The conference also featured a wide range of engaging presentations on **seabird ecology**, conservation, and population trends, which broadened my perspective on the ecological challenges and research priorities for New Zealand's coastal species. Engaging with researchers whose work overlaps with mine generated several ideas for potential collaborations and comparative analyses.

I am sincerely grateful to **Birds New Zealand** for supporting my attendance through the **Fledgling Fund Grant 2025**, which made it possible to share my work and participate in this national forum. Overall, the conference strengthened my understanding of New Zealand's ornithological research community and reinforced the importance of applying behavioural ecology to conservation practice. Sharing my PhD research at this event was both motivating and encouraging, and I deeply appreciate the constructive feedback and warm support from the organisers and participants.

Zunaira Noreen

PhD Candidate, Department of Zoology, University of Otago

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