

Being the 2025 recipient for the Birds New Zealand Fledgling Grant was an honour and a privilege I was exceedingly happy to be a part of. The Grant allowed me to go to the conference in Auckland and present part of my ongoing thesis to a diverse audience of scientists, academics, volunteers, all united in their passion by the amazing taonga manu diversity in Aotearoa. The Conference was even more special to me as it allowed reconnecting with Tiritiri Matangi long-time supporters that were so welcoming to me when I was a young student in 2015. To put faces to names I have read in papers throughout the years was also an additional delight that was a highlight of the Conference. Hearing the experiences of people with 30+ years of birding experience, and the amazing work they do at integrating bird conservation into this world, was inspiring beyond words. The mingling of young students with well-seasoned veterans is one of the greatest strengths of these events, as I believe it works both ways: the amazing people we hear about inspire us to continue the good work, and we can hopefully show them that even in a rapidly changing world, there is still much to do and much to fight for in conserving birds. We can only hope to make older and newer generations, and our birds, proud.



(I didn't take many photos during the Conference, but this is one for the archives: me as a young 21 years old exchange student doing the monitoring of North Island robins at Tiritiri Matangi during the 2015-16 summer)