

Vagrant and extra-limital bird records accepted by the Birds New Zealand Records Appraisal Committee 2023–2024

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Abstract: We report Records Appraisal Committee (RAC) decisions regarding Unusual Bird Reports received between 1 January 2023 and 31 December 2024. Among the 195 submissions accepted by the RAC were the first New Zealand records of Horsfield's bronze-cuckoo (*Chrysococcyx basalis*), MacGillivray's prion (*Pachyptila macgillivrayi*), and the Asian subspecies of gull-billed tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica affinis*). We also report the second accepted records of stilt sandpiper (*Calidris himantopus*), Bulwer's petrel (*Bulweria bulwerii*), and dusky woodswallow (*Artamus personatus*), the third accepted sighting of northern pintail (*Anas acuta*), and the second and third accepted records of streaked shearwater (*Calonectris leucomelas*). Other notable records included the first records of Kermadec petrel (*Pterodroma neglecta*) and brown booby (*Sula leucogaster*) at Rēkohu/Wharekauri/Chatham Islands, plumed whistling duck (*Dendrocygna eytoni*) at the Snares Islands/Tini Heke, Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*) and black shag (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) at Antipodes Island/Moutere Mahue, and fork-tailed swift (*Apus pacificus*) and tree martin (*Petrochelidon nigricans*) at the Auckland Islands/Motu Maha. We also clarify the dates of occurrence of the first vagrant lesser frigatebird (*Fregata ariel*), Australian pelican (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*), and black-faced cuckoo-shrike (*Coracina novaehollandiae*), all recorded from New Zealand before 1900.

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INTRODUCTION

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Here, we report RAC decisions made on Unusual Bird Reports (UBRs) received between 1 January 2023 and 31 December 2024, following on from the last report of the RAC (Miskelly *et al.* 2023).

Results of RAC decisions are posted on the Unusual Bird Report website (<http://rare.birds.org.nz/>) every 2 months.

The website provides a means for observers to determine whether a UBR has already been submitted for any vagrant bird seen or reported, and (within 2–4 months) to see the RAC decision on the UBR. This biennial report provides more detail about sightings than what is presented on the website, including providing context for the significance of each sighting.

Each UBR received is given a number whereby the first four digits represent the year the record was received and the last three digits the chronological sequence of receipt within that year. These reference numbers are given for each record below and match those on the Unusual Bird Report website. Nomenclature and taxonomic sequence follow Checklist Committee (2024). Where images of birds reported here have been published on New Zealand Birds Online (NZBO, www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz, viewed 8 Aug 2025) this is mentioned in the text.

The RAC convenor maintains a database of verified sightings of vagrant birds in New Zealand.

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DECISIONS ON SUBMITTED SIGHTINGS

Accepted records of vagrant and rare migrant species to New Zealand

Plumed whistling duck (*Dendrocygna eytoni*)

Three on North East Island, Snares Islands/Tini Heke, between 25 Mar & 7 Apr 2023 (Paul & David Sagar, and David Thompson; UBR 2023/062) were the first record from the Snares Islands or any of the subantarctic islands. Ten at Lake Killarney, Tākaka, on 19 Dec 2024 (Wendy Hare and John Longden; UBR 2024/110). There are 18 previous accepted records of singles or flocks of up to 14 birds (Miskelly *et al.* 2017, 2023).

Chestnut-breasted shelduck (*Tadorna tadornoides*)

A male near Meremere, Waikato, on 2 Dec 2023 (Colin & Gordon Miskelly; UBR 2024/058); a male shot near Martinborough, Wairarapa, on 15 May 2024 (Wellington Fish and Game; UBR 2024/045). There are 42 previous accepted records in New Zealand (Heather 1987; Miskelly *et al.* 2023).

Chestnut teal (*Anas castanea*)

One at Ashburton/Hakaterere River mouth, Canterbury, on 21 & 22 Jun 2023 (Andrew Crossland and Tom Broughton; UBR 2023/079). There are 20 previous accepted records from New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2023).

Northern pintail (*Anas acuta*)

A female at Tip Lagoon, Invercargill, on 9 Sep 2023 (Oscar Thomas; UBR 2024/072) was the third record from New Zealand. This was the same location, and was likely the same individual as the second record (October 2021; Miskelly *et al.* 2023).

Northern shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*)

One at Pegasus Wetland, Canterbury, on 30 Mar 2023 (Christian Cosgrove and 13 other observers; UBR 2023/085); one Lake Elterwater, Marlborough, on 26 Apr 2024 (Dave Howes, Malcolm & Michael Boswell; UBR 2024/039); one at Bromley oxidation ponds, Christchurch, on 10 Dec 2024 (A. Xiong; UBR 2024/106).

There was an unprecedented influx of northern shovelers in 2017–18, with at least five different birds present in June 2018 (Miskelly *et al.* 2019). They continued to be reported frequently during 2019–2022 (Miskelly *et al.* 2021, 2023).

Australian white-eyed duck (*Aythya australis*)

A mounted male specimen in Auckland Museum (LB3969) collected at Lake Waikare, Waikato, by H. Rowland in mid-June 1908 (date from *Waikato Argus*, Volume XXIV, Issue 3812, 19 Jun 1908, p.2, reported by George Watola; UBR 2023/068) may have been one of the last survivors of the 1867–1895 colonisation attempt (Oliver 1955). One at Wakapuaka oxidation ponds, Nelson, on 24 Apr 2023 (Warwick Allen, Aleisha & Heather Fisher; UBR 2023/058). There are ten previous records accepted since 1973 (Miskelly *et al.* 2017).

Hoary-headed grebe (*Poliiocephalus poliocephalus*)

One in Waihopai Valley, Marlborough, on 30 Jun 2024 (Patrick Crowe and nine other observers; UBR 2024/085) may have come from Lake Elterwater about 45 km away, where at least two pairs plus juveniles were reported between 2014 and 2018 (Miskelly *et al.* 2019), with eBird records indicating a population still present in 2024.

Pallid cuckoo (*Cacomantis pallidus*)

One at Ringa Ringa, Rakiura/Stewart Island, on 19 Oct 2022 (Matt Jones and Phil Burns; UBR 2023/026) was the first from Stewart Island and the eighth from New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2021).

Horsfield's bronze-cuckoo (*Chrysococcyx basalis*)

A juvenile found dead on Muriwai Beach, West Auckland, on 16 Mar 2024 (UBR 2024/077; Auckland Museum specimen LB16349) was the first record from New Zealand (Galbraith & Gill 2025).

White-throated needletail (*Hirundapus caudacutus*)

One at Mount Eden/Te Tātua-a-Riukiuta, Auckland, on 7 Jan 1912 (Ivan G.L. Blyth, reported by George Watola; UBR 2023/089) becomes the second known record from New Zealand, following one shot at Manaia, Taranaki, in March 1888 (Kirk 1889). One at Motupōhue/Bluff Hill, Southland, on 27 Dec 2022 (Sean & Pip Jacques; UBR 2023/003). White-throated needletails are frequent vagrants to New Zealand (Checklist Committee 2022).

Fork-tailed swift (*Apus pacificus*)

One at Enderby Island, Auckland Islands/Motu Maha, on 27 Dec 2022 (Dave Howes and Matt Jones; UBR 2023/004) was the first record from the Auckland Islands. Two at Tiritiri Matangi Island on 7 Jan 2023 (Steve & Anna Sutcliffe, and Morag Fordham; 2023/008), and three at Ōpihi River near Pleasant Point, South Canterbury, on 19 Aug 2023 (Don Geddes; 2023/101). One at Antipodes Island/Moutere Mahue on 6 Dec 2024 (Thomas Mattern; UBR 2024/113) was the second record from Antipodes Island (Medway 2003). There were 16 previous accepted New Zealand records (Miskelly *et al.* 2021).

Black-tailed native-hen (*Tribonyx ventralis*)

One at Murchison on 8 Feb 2023 (Oscar Thomas, Ela Hunt, and Noah Fenwick; UBR 2023/030, images on NZBO); one at Cascade Creek Campsite, Eglinton Valley, Fiordland, on

7 & 15 Nov 2024 (Richard Schofield and Michael Burton-Smith; UBR 2024/103a & b). There were six previous accepted New Zealand records (Miskelly *et al.* 2013).

Grey plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*)

One at Manukapua/Big Sand Island, Kaipara Harbour, on 17 Aug 2024 (Oscar Thomas and Ela Hunt; UBR 2024/075). Single grey plovers were reported annually from 2001 to 2005; this is the fifth record since then (Miskelly *et al.* 2021).

Semipalmated plover (*Charadrius semipalmatus*)

One at Manukapua/Big Sand Island, Kaipara Harbour, on 22 & 27 June and 12 Jul 2024 (Phil Hammond, Tony Crocker, and four other observers; UBR 2024/054) was the third accepted record from New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2013).

Greater sand plover (*Anarhynchus leschenaultii*)

Two at Awarua Bay, Southland, on 20 Nov 2021 (Oscar Thomas and seven other observers; 2024/073); one at Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere, Canterbury, 8 Jan 2023 (Fraser Gurney and Jesse Rubenstein; UBR 2023/134), one at Kaitorete Spit, Canterbury, on 6 May 2023 (Ben Ackerley; UBR 2023/103). Considered an annual visitor to New Zealand before 2010, these are the seventh to ninth records accepted since then (Checklist Committee 2010; Miskelly *et al.* 2023).

Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*)

One at Te Awapatiki, Rēkohu/Wharekauri/Chatham Island, on 29 Dec 2022 (Mike Bell; UBR 2023/018) was the seventh record from the Chatham Islands.

Little whimbrel (*Numenius minutus*)

Two at Whatipu, West Auckland, on 31 Jan 2015 (Russell Cannings; UBR 2024/076); one at New River Estuary, Invercargill, on 11 & 19 February and 5 Mar 2023 (Sean Jacques, Paul Jacques, Joe Bliss, Anna Harris, and Pete McClelland; UBR 2023/054). Considered an uncommon visitor to New Zealand (Checklist Committee 2022); there have been eight accepted records since 2010 (Miskelly *et al.* 2023).

Black-tailed godwit (*Limosa limosa melanuroides*)

One at Pūkorokoro/Miranda, Firth of Thames, on 6 Feb 2023 (Oscar Thomas and Ela Hunt; UBR 2023/045). Black-tailed godwits are uncommon but probably annual visitors to New Zealand (Checklist Committee 2022).

Hudsonian godwit (*Limosa haemastica*)

One at Kaikorai Lagoon, Otago, on 4 Mar 2023 (Peter Fuller; UBR 2023/028); one at Manawatu River estuary on 3 Oct 2023 (Jim Norris, Alan Tennyson, and two other observers; UBR 2023/107). Hudsonian godwits are uncommon but probably annual visitors to New Zealand (Checklist Committee 2022).

Great knot (*Calidris tenuirostris*)

One at Manukapua/Big Sand Island, Kaipara Harbour, on 3 Oct 2023 (Tony Crocker, Dave Howes, and John Kyngdon; UBR 2023/127). There are 23 previous accepted records from New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2023).

Stilt sandpiper (*Calidris himantopus*)

One at Waituna Lagoon, Southland, on 14 Sep 2024 (Sean Jacques; UBR 2024/080) was the second record from New Zealand (Medway 2001).

Long-toed stint (*Calidris subminuta*)

One at Waituna Lagoon, Southland, on 14 Jan 2024 (Sean Jacques; UBR 2024/024) was the fourth record from New Zealand and the first away from Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere (Checklist Committee 2022; Miskelly *et al.* 2023).

Sanderling (*Calidris alba*)

One at Ashley River/Rakahuri estuary, Canterbury, on 18 Feb 2023 (Don Geddes; UBR 2023/043). One or two sanderlings reach New Zealand most years (Miskelly *et al.* 2019, 2021).

Pectoral sandpiper (*Calidris melanotos*)

Three on the northern shore of Te Whanga Lagoon, Rēkohu/Wharekauri/Chatham Island, on 12 Mar 2023 (Tom Hitchon; UBR 2023/052) was the fifth record from the Chatham Islands (Miskelly *et al.* 2015).

Terek sandpiper (*Xenus cinereus*)

One at Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere on 25 Oct 2023 (Warwick Allen; UBR 2023/111); one at Motueka sandspit on 12 Feb 2024 (Craig Martin; UBR 2024/017); one at Ashley River/Rakahuri estuary on 27 Oct 2024 (Nicholas Allen; UBR 2024/092) follow the three reports during 2021–22 (Miskelly *et al.* 2023). No Terek sandpipers were reported between 2015 and 2020 (Miskelly *et al.* 2023).

Wandering tattler (*Tringa incana*)

Two at Kaikōura Peninsula on 17 Aug 1988 (George & Julia Watola; UBR 2023/095); one at Tapotupotu Beach, near Cape Reinga, on 11 Oct 2023 (Darryl Jeffries and Clara Ampe; UBR 2023/113); one at Proctor's Beach, Whangārei Heads, on 3 Nov 2023 (Cathy Mitchell; UBR 2023/114). Wandering tattlers are uncommon but probably annual visitors to the New Zealand mainland (Checklist Committee 2022). Two at Cape Pattison, Rēkohu/Wharekauri/Chatham Island, on 4 Jan 2023 (Mike Bell; UBR 2023/017) were the tenth accepted record from the Chatham Islands (Miskelly *et al.* 2023).

South Polar skua (*Stercorarius maccormicki*)

Single birds east of Poor Knights Islands on 1 Dec 2023, and 13 & 27 October, 11 November, and 1 Dec 2024 (Scott Brooks and 35 other observers; UBRs 2024/034, 2024/086, 2024/100, 2024/101, & 2024/108). South Polar skuas are scarce but likely annual migrants to New Zealand, with 25 previous accepted records (Miskelly *et al.* 2023).

Pomarine skua (*Stercorarius pomarinus*)

One south of Rangihau/Rangiauria/Pitt Island, Chatham Islands, on 3 Feb 2023 (Johannes Fischer; UBR 2023/086) was the second accepted record from the Chatham Islands (Miskelly *et al.* 2006).

Long-tailed skua (*Stercorarius longicaudus*)

One dead on Te Horo beach, Horowhenua, on 13 May 2020 (Alan Tennyson; UBR 2024/079); singles east of Poor Knights Islands on 13 Oct 2024 & 4 Nov 2024 (Scott Brooks and 11 other observers; UBRs 2024/087 & 2024/094). Long-tailed skuas are scarce annual migrants to New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2019).

White tern (*Gygis alba*)

One at sea west of Cape Reinga on 11 Dec 2022 (Jordan Roderick and six other observers; UBR 2023/051). There are about 17 previous New Zealand records away from the Kermadec Islands/Rangitāhua (Miskelly *et al.* 2021).

Little tern (*Sternula albifrons*)

One at Brooklands Lagoon, Christchurch, on 2 Apr 2019 and 8 Mar 2023 (Andrew Crossland [both records], Antony Shadbolt, and Hannah Murdoch [2023]; UBRs 2023/031 & 2023/037); one at outlet of Lake Forsyth/Wairewa, Banks Peninsula, on 22 Jul 2019 and 13 Feb 2023 (Andrew Crossland; UBRs 2023/032 & 2023/039); one at the tip of Kaitorete Spit, Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere, on 23 Jan 2020 & 2 Apr 2023 (Andrew & Xavier Crossland, and Philip Crutchley respectively; UBRs 2023/036 & 2023/050), with two there on 12 Mar 2023 (Philip Crutchley; UBR 2023/041); one at Ashburton/Hakateri River estuary

on 18 Dec 2021 (Andrew Crossland and Frances Schmechel; UBR 2023/038); six at New River estuary, Invercargill, between 13 May 2022 and 17 Jun 2023 (Sean Jacques and four other observers; UBR 2023/090); one at Birdings Flat Beach, Banks Peninsula, on 6 & 8 Jan 2023 (David Newell, and Tom Broughton and Laura Smith respectively; UBRs 2023/005a & b); one at Te Waewae Lagoon, western Southland, on 12 Apr 2023 (Sean Jacques; UBR 2023/073). Little terns are annual migrants to northern New Zealand, with a few previous records as far south as Invercargill and Rakiura/Stewart Island (Higgins & Davies 1996). Following this spate of South Island records, little terns are no longer a reportable species for either of the two main islands.



Figure 1. Gull-billed tern of the Asian subspecies (*Gelochelidon nilotica affinis*) at Big Sand Island, Kaipara Harbour, January 2023 (image by Dave Howes; UBR 2023-007).

Gull-billed tern (*Gelochelidon nilotica*)

A gull-billed tern of the Asian subspecies (*G. n. affinis*) at Manukapua/Big Sand Island, Kaipara Harbour, on 22 Jan 2023 (Dave Howes and Aaron Skelton; UBR 2023/007, Fig. 1) was the first New Zealand record of this subspecies. All remaining New Zealand records since 1955 are considered to be of the Australian subspecies (*G. n. macrotarsa*), including one at Kaikokopu Stream mouth, Himatangi Beach, Manawatu, on 29 Apr 2023 (Ian Armitage; UBR 2023/060); one at Whanganui River estuary on 1 Jun 2023 (Dallas Bishop and Geoff de Lisle; UBR 2023/070); one at Pūkoro/Miranda, Firth of Thames, on 15 Jun 2023 (Tansy Bliss; UBR 2023/104); one at Piako wader roost, Firth of Thames, on 27 Aug 2023 (Tansy Bliss; UBR 2023/105), with three there on 2 Sep 2023 (Russell Cannings; UBR 2023/105a); six at Waiuku sandspit, southern Manukau Harbour, on 16 Nov 2023 (Brian Crum; UBR 2023/119); one at Pouto Point, north Kaipara head, on 22 Nov 2023 (Gary & Robyn Wilson; UBR 2023/120); three adults including a breeding pair at Bell Island shellbank, Waimea Inlet, Tasman, on 10 Oct 2024 (David Melville; UBR 2024/081). This last pair laid two clutches, raising two fledglings on the second attempt, which was the second successful breeding of gull-billed terns in New Zealand (Jacques *et al.* 2023; Melville *et al.* 2025).

Whiskered tern (*Chlidonias hybridus*)

One at Waituna Lagoon, Southland, on 14 Mar 2024 (Sean Jacques and Hayley Lister; UBR 2024/049); one at Pūkoro/Miranda, Firth of Thames, on 22 Apr 2024 (Dave Howes, Malcolm and Michael Boswell; UBR 2024/040). There had been 17 previous accepted records of whiskered terns in New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2023).

Arctic tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)

One at Stirling Point, Bluff, on 18 Dec 2021 (Johannes Fischer, Igor Debski, and Harry Boorman; UBR 2023/075), with another at Waipapa Point, Southland, on the same date (Johannes Fischer, Jason Preble, and Kris Kokame;

UBR 2023/076); one at Kaiaua, Firth of Thames, on 19 Feb 2023 (Russell Cannings; UBR 2023/053); one at Walker Island, Kaipara Harbour, on 9 Feb 2024 (Bradley Shields, Mathieu Poot, and Scott Brooks; UBR 2024/020); one at Ashley River/Rakahuri estuary, Canterbury, on 4 Apr 2024 (Adam Colley; UBR 2024/056). Arctic terns are presumed to be annual visitors to New Zealand (Checklist Committee 2022).

Common tern (*Sterna hirundo*)

One at Waikanae River mouth on 1 Jan 2023 (Alan, David and Sam Tennyson and Bernd Huss; UBR 2023/001), with another there on 14 Jan 2024 (Alan Tennyson; UBR 2024/008); one at Table Cape, Mahia Peninsula, on 17 Apr 2023 (Russell Cannings; UBR 2023/099); one at Whakatiwai, Firth of Thames, on 27 May 2023 (Tony Habraken; UBR 2023/093); one at Hukatere, Ninety Mile Beach, on 4 Nov 2023 (Colin & Gordon Miskelly; 2024/059); one at Argyle Beach, Bluff, on 8 Jan 2024 (Kit Hustler; UBR 2024/023); one at Manawatu estuary on 10 Jan 2024 (Graham Barwell and Rebecca Albury; UBR 2024/004), with another there on 10 Feb 2024 (Neill Haggarty; UBR 2024/018); one at Ashley River/Rakahuri estuary, Canterbury, on 13 Jan 2024 (Christian Cosgrove; UBR 2024/006), with another there on 4 Apr 2024 (Adam & Jack Colley, and Ben Ackerley; UBR 2024/057); four different birds on the Kapiti Coast on 21 & 22 Jan 2024 (Alan Tennyson, Johannes Fischer, and Igor Debski; UBR 2024/027); one at Plimmerton, Wellington, on 16 Feb 2024 (Alan & Sam Tennyson; UBR 2024/022); one at Thames waterfront on 3 Nov 2024 (Tony Habraken; UBR 2024/095); one at Saltwater Creek estuary, Waikuku, Canterbury, on 9 Nov 2024 (Ben Ackerley; UBR 2024/102).

There are about 80 accepted records of common terns from New Zealand, with nearly half of these being from the Manawatu estuary/Foxton Beach or from Waikanae, 49 km to the south (Miskelly *et al.* 2023). Common terns are no longer a reportable species on the North or South Islands.

Crested tern (*Thalasseus bergii*)

One at Maukatia Bay, Muriwai, West Auckland, on 24 Oct 2024 (Tony Habraken; UBR 2024/091) was the 20th accepted record (Miskelly *et al.* 2021 & 2023).

King penguin (*Aptenodytes patagonicus*)

One at Oreti Beach, Invercargill, on 12 Jul 2024 (Pat Hoffman and six other observers; UBR 2024/053) was the eighth record of a king penguin from the South Island (Miskelly *et al.* 2023).

Adelie penguin (*Pygoscelis adeliae*)

Adults at Monkey Island, Te Waewae Bay, Southland, on 4 Jan 2024 (Bill McMurray and Pippa Brown; UBR 2024/007), St Clair Beach, Dunedin, on 15 & 16 Jan 2024 (Jim Watts and four other observers; UBR 2024/009) and at Petone Beach, Wellington on 12 Oct 2024 (Joss Debreceeny via Michael Szabo; UBR 2024/082) were the sixth to eighth records of Adelie penguins from New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2022 & 2023).

Royal penguin (*Eudyptes chrysolophus schlegeli*)

One at Flower Pot, Rangihau/Rangiauria/Pitt Island, Chatham Islands, on 15 Feb 2023 (Celine Gregory-Hunt via Mike Bell; UBR 2023/023) was the fifth record from the Chatham Islands (Miskelly *et al.* 2021).

Atlantic yellow-nosed albatross (*Thalassarche chlororhynchus*)

One at Motuhara/The Forty Fours, Chatham Islands, on 8 Dec 2022 (Mike & Dave Bell; UBR 2023/019) was the fourth record from the Chatham Islands and the sixth from New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2006 & 2021).

Indian Ocean yellow-nosed albatross (*Thalassarche carteri*)

One off Cape Foulwind, Westport, on 16 Jan 2024 (Javier Cotin; UBR 2024/011); one east of the Poor Knights Islands on 22 Sep 2024 (Aaron Skelton and eight other observers, via Scott Brooks; UBR 2024/078). This species was an annual visitor to northern New Zealand until the 1980s; since then, it has been reported only two or three times a decade (Miskelly *et al.* 2019 & 2023).

Leach's storm petrel (*Hydrobates leucorhous*)

One at Taiaroa Head, Otago, on 23 Mar 2023 (recorded on the "Royal Cam" albatross trail camera, reported via Johannes Fischer; UBR 2023/117) was the first live record from the New Zealand mainland (Checklist Committee 2022).

Juan Fernandez petrel (*Pterodroma externa*)

One off Pukerua Bay, north of Wellington, on 3 Feb 2024 (Johannes Fischer and Igor Debski; UBR 2024/021) was the fifth record on or near the main islands of New Zealand, and was at a similar time of year to one seen north-west of Mana Island (i.e. near Pukerua Bay) in March 2019 (Miskelly *et al.* 2021).

Gould's petrel (*Pterodroma leucoptera*)

Nine 570–650 km north-east of North Cape on 8 Nov 2023, seven 290–350 km north-west of Raoul Island, Kermadec Islands, on 8 Nov 2023, and two 290 km east of North Cape (all Oscar Thomas and Ela Hunt; UBRs 2023/121, 2023/122 & 2023/123) confirm this species as regularly present in seas north of New Zealand between December and April (Miskelly *et al.* 2023), although they have also occurred as beach-wrecks in May, June, and November (Powlesland 1987).

Bulwer's petrel (*Bulweria bulwerii*)

One found live on New Brighton Beach, Christchurch, on 22 Jan 2014 subsequently died, and is now specimen 2020.23.1 in Canterbury Museum (Paul Scofield via George Watola; UBR 2023/088). This was the second accepted New Zealand record, following one that washed ashore on Te Horo Beach, north of Wellington, in January 1998 (Checklist Committee 2022).

Blue petrel (*Halobaena caerulea*)

One at Papanui Canyon, off Otago Peninsula, on 11 Jul 2024 (Oscar Thomas and six other observers; UBR 2024/051) was the third accepted at-sea sighting of this species from New Zealand north of the subantarctic zone (Miskelly *et al.* 2019).

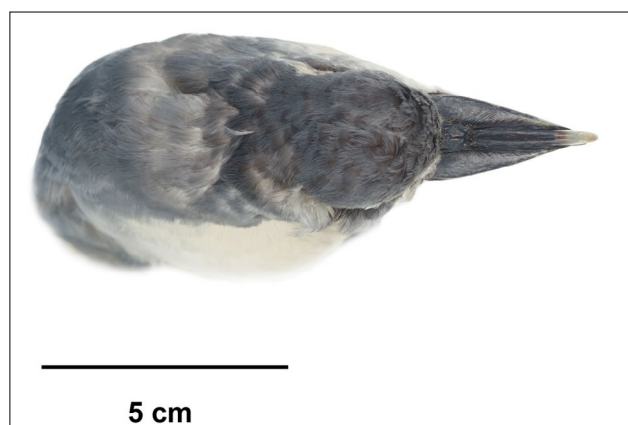


Figure 2. Dorsal view of head and bill of the MacGillivray's prion (*Pachyptila macgillivrayi*) found beach-wrecked on Ōtaki Beach, Horowhenua, in July 1954 (Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa specimen OR.021886; image by Jean Claude Stahl, Te Papa).

MacGillivray's prion (*Pachyptila macgillivrayi*)

One found beach-wrecked on Ōtaki Beach, Horowhenua, by Peter Bull on 4 Jul 1954 was acquired by the National Museum of New Zealand (now Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa) in 1979 via the Falla Collection, and was registered as a broad-billed prion (*Pachyptila vittata*; specimen OR.021886, Fig. 2). It was identified as a MacGillivray's prion using genetic methods in 2024, with mitochondrial DNA and bill measurements indicating that it came from Gough Island in the South Atlantic Ocean, rather than the closer St Paul Island population in the southern Indian Ocean (Miskelly *et al.* 2025; UBR 2024/107). First accepted New Zealand record.

Thin-billed prion (*Pachyptila belcheri*)

One south of Antipodes Island/Moutere Mahue on 13 Dec 2022 (Mike Sylvia and seven other observers; UBR 2023/025); two at Papanui Canyon, off Otago Peninsula, on 11 Jul 2024 (Oscar Thomas and six other observers; UBR 2024/052), with one there on 11 Aug 2024 (Oscar Thomas and five other observers; UBR 2024/068). Thin-billed prions are regularly found dead on New Zealand beaches in winter (Powlesland 1989). However, the Records Appraisal Committee has accepted only four previous reports of birds seen at sea (Miskelly *et al.* 2023).



Figure 3. Streaked shearwater (*Calonectris leucomelas*) east of the Poor Knights Islands, November 2023 (image by Oscar Thomas; UBR 2023-112).

Streaked shearwater (*Calonectris leucomelas*)

One east of the Poor Knights Islands on 1 Nov 2023 (Oscar Thomas, Scott Brooks, and nine other observers; Fig. 3 plus images on NZBO, UBR 2023/112) was the second record, and first live record, from New Zealand (Scofield *et al.* 2011). One long dead at Moa Point, Wellington, on 27 Oct 2024 (Te Papa specimen OR.031459; Alan Tennyson, UBR 2024/111) becomes the third accepted record.

Great shearwater (*Ardenna gravis*)

One off Taiaroa Head, Otago, on 23 Mar 2023 (Oscar Thomas; UBR 2023/035) was the 11th accepted record from New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2021 & 2023).

Lesser frigatebird (*Fregata ariel*)

One found at Farewell Spit on 15 Apr 1891 is the first record from New Zealand (UBR 2023/074; date and species identification clarified by Watola 2025). This specimen was originally identified by Buller (1892) as a great frigatebird (*F. minor*), and there has also been confusion over whether

the bird was found in 1891 or 1901 (Buller 1892 & 1906). The specimen is held by Carnegie Museum (CMNH 24551; Bartle & Tennyson 2009). One at Mercury Cove, Great Mercury Island, on 1 Mar 2024 (Sandra & Chris Constance; UBR 2024/026). There are at least 42 previous records (Miskelly *et al.* 2023).

Brown booby (*Sula leucogaster*)

One dead on Motuhara/The Forty Fours, Chatham Islands, on 10 Dec 2022 (Mike & Dave Bell; UBR 2023/016) was the first record from the Chatham Islands.

Australian pelican (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*)

One shot a mile above Hiruhārama/Jerusalem, Whanganui River, in June 1889 (Samuel Drew via George Watola; UBR 2023/084) was the first record of a vagrant pelican following European contact. This record has previously been reported as 1890 (Buller 1893; Checklist Committee 2022); an article in *The Wanganui Chronicle* on 10 Jul 1889 (Vol. XXXII, Issue 11431, p.2) clarifies that it was shot in June 1889 or earlier in that year (George Watola, UBR 2023/084).

Pacific heron (*Ardea pacifica*)

One at Waitangiroto Nature Reserve, Whataroa, West Coast, on 8 Jan 2024 (Dion Arnold; UBR 2024/005); there are 12 previous accepted records (Miskelly *et al.* 2015).

Black-faced cuckoo-shrike (*Coracina novaehollandiae*)

One shot at Motueka in or before August 1864 (W. Giblin via George Watola; UBR 2023/069) was the first record from New Zealand. This specimen has previously been reported as having been collected c. 1869 (Hutton 1871; Checklist Committee 2022); an article in the *Timaru Herald* on 13 Aug 1864 (Vol. I, Issue 10, p. 6) clarifies that it was shot in August 1864 or earlier that year (George Watola, UBR 2023/069).

Dusky woodswallow (*Artamus cyanopterus*)

One at Oban, Rakiura/Stewart Island, 8–10 Sep 2024 (Adrian Munro and six other observers, image on NZBO; UBR 2024/074) was within a kilometre of the site of the only other accepted record, of a bird seen on 27 Sep 2014 (Kakishima & Morimoto 2015).

Fairy martin (*Petrochelidon ariel*)

One at Whenua Hou/Codfish Island on 15 Oct 2023 (Johannes Fischer; UBR 2023/109). There are 13 previous records from New Zealand (Miskelly *et al.* 2011).

Tree martin (*Petrochelidon nigricans*)

One at Aniseed Valley, Tasman, on 24 Oct 2022 (Paul Bennett; UBR 2023/132). There are more than 50 accepted records from the New Zealand mainland (Miskelly *et al.* 2021). One at Enderby Island, Auckland Islands/Motu Maha, on 5 Feb 2023 (Niall Mugan and Kate Sutherland; UBR 2023/042) was the first record from the Auckland Islands.

Accepted extra-limital records of New Zealand breeding species

Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*)

One at Antipodes Island/Moutere Mahue on 12 Nov 2024 (Jeff White, Thomas Mattern, and Myrene Otis; UBR 2024/099) was the first record from Antipodes Island. Elsewhere in the New Zealand subantarctic, Canada geese have occurred at the Snares Islands/Tini Heke (Miskelly *et al.* 2001, 2021), Auckland Islands/Motu Maha (Miskelly *et al.* 2020), and Campbell Island/Motu Ihupuku (in late 2011, Kyle Morrison *pers. comm.* to CMM).

Grey teal (*Anas gracilis*)

One at North East Island, Snares Islands/Tini Heke, on 7 Apr 2023 (Paul & David Sagar; UBR 2023/063) was the second record from the Snares Islands (Miskelly *et al.* 2001). Further south, grey teal have reached the Auckland Islands/Motu Maha (Miskelly *et al.* 2020), and Campbell Island/Motu Ihupuku (two in October 2012, Kyle Morrison *pers. comm.* to CMM).

New Zealand dabchick (*Poliocephalus rufopectus*)

One at Pegasus wetlands, North Canterbury, on 16 Apr 2023 (Christian Cosgrove, Bradley Shields, Bev Alexander, and Warwick Allen; UBR 2023/055); one at Lake Forsyth/Wairewa, Banks Peninsula, on 22 May and 31 Jul 2023, with two there on 27 Jun 2023 (Andrew Crossland; UBRs 2023/066 & 2023/097); one at St Anne's Lagoon, Cheviot, on 1 May 2023 (Dallas Bishop and Geoff de Lisle; UBR 2023/072); one 18 km west of Ashburton on 18 Jun 2023 (Nick Allen and Don Geddes; UBR 2023/078).

New Zealand dabchicks are widespread in the North Island and have a small, recently established population in the Nelson and Marlborough regions, and regularly occur in Canterbury (Miskelly *et al.* 2019, 2021, 2023). They are no longer reportable on the east coast of the South Island north of the Waitaki River.

Australasian little grebe (*Tachybaptus novaehollandiae*)

One at wastewater treatment ponds, Wakapuaka, Nelson, on 27 Mar 2023 (Peter Field; UBR 2023/047); one at Pharazyn Reserve, Waikanae, on 6 Apr 2023 and 20 Oct 2024 (Diane Parker and Duncan Watson; UBRs 2023/046 & 2024/089); one at Barrytown, West Coast, on 26 Apr & 28 Jun 2023 (Stuart Laurenson and Bradley Shields; UBRs 2023/059 & 2023/092); one at Franz Josef wastewater treatment ponds on 12 Jul 2023 (Bradley Shields and Chad Cottle; UBR 2023/091); one at Styx Mill Reserve, Christchurch, on 25 Nov 2023 (Warwick Allen; UBR 2023/126); three at Lake Murray, Tekapo, on 9, 12 & 13 Jan 2024 (Rohan Clarke, Anders Wiig Nielson, and Birgitte Mortenen; UBR 2024/010a & b); two at Bankhouse Estate, Waihopai Valley, Marlborough, on 27 Jan & 30 Jun 2024 (Patrick Crowe and 13 other observers; UBRs 2024/014 & 2024/084).

This rare breeding species is resident in Northland and North Auckland (Beauchamp 2019). There were only four South Island records between 2008 and 2023 (Miskelly *et al.* 2019, 2021, 2023).

Spotted dove (*Streptopelia chinensis*)

At least 50 around Charing Cross, Canterbury, on 26 Mar 2023 (Andrew Crossland; UBR 2023/040); one at Norwood, mid-Canterbury, on 6 May 2023 (Andrew Crossland; UBR 2023/061). The Charing Cross population is recently established and is the only known South Island population (Miskelly *et al.* 2023). Spotted doves are no longer reportable in the portion of northern Canterbury between Waimakariri and Rakaia Rivers.

Australian coot (*Fulica atra*)

Four at North East Island, Snares Islands/Tini Heke, between 25 March and 9 Apr 2023 (Paul & David Sagar and David Thompson; 2023/064) were the second record from the Snares Islands (Miskelly *et al.* 2015). One captured on a trail camera at Teal Lake, Enderby Island, on 11 May 2023 (Bronwyn Jeaynes and Sean Jacques; UBR 2024/065) was the second record from the Auckland Islands/Motu Maha (Miskelly *et al.* 2020).

Marsh crane (*Zapornia pusilla*)

One captured alive on Golden Bay Track, Rakiura/Stewart Island, on 6 May 2024 (Daniel Cocker and Guy McDonald; UBR 2024/038). Oliver (1955) included Stewart Island

within the distribution range of marsh crake without providing further detail. There are no known records south of Stewart Island.

Sooty tern (*Onychoprion fuscata*)

One dead at Lake Rotoehu, Bay of Plenty, on 13 Jan 2023 (Steven Crosbie; UBR 2023/011); at least 17 at Ngunguru, Northland, on 13 Feb 2023 (Scott Brooks and family; UBR 2023/015); one at Walker Island, Raungau Harbour, Far North, on 30 Nov and 14 Dec 2023 (Mathieu Poot and George Watola; UBRs 2023/130 & 2024/012). Within the New Zealand region, sooty terns breed only on the Kermadec Islands, with at least 18 previous records from elsewhere in the region (Veitch *et al.* 2004; Miskelly *et al.* 2023).

Antarctic tern (*Sterna vittata*)

One at Aramoana Mole, Otago, on 7 Dec 2023 (Oscar Thomas, Nick Beckwith, Ela Hunt, and Janina Castro; UBR 2023/124) was the first record accepted by the RAC for an Antarctic tern ashore in the South Island.

Eastern rockhopper penguin (*Eudyptes filholi*)

One at Conway Flat, south of Kaikōura, on 1 Feb 2024 (Sabrina Luecht, Jemima Rodden, and Roger Williams; UBR 2024/015) was the fifth accepted South Island record. Most records before 2010 did not differentiate between the three species of rockhopper penguins (Miskelly *et al.* 2023).

Erect-crested penguin (*Eudyptes sclateri*)

One between Flea Bay and Stony Bay, Banks Peninsula, on 3 Feb 2023 (Charles & Jenny Wall, David & Amanda Goodburn; UBR 2023/012); one at Curio Bay, Southland, on 9 Feb 2023 (alongside a Fiordland crested penguin – Franziska Benz; UBR 2023/010); one at Toetoes Bay, Waituna, Southland, 13 & 26 Feb 2023 (Sean Jacques, Trevor Huggins, Joe Bliss, and Pete McClelland; UBR 2023/056); one at South Bay, Kaikōura, on 20 Feb 2023 (Patrick Crowe; UBR 2023/033); one at sea at 45.0°S 179.2°E (between Chatham Islands and Bluff) (Gillian Matthew, Jonas Giese, and eight other observers; UBR 2023/135). Erect-crested penguins breed on the Bounty and Antipodes Islands, with at least one bird reported moulting on the east coast of the South Island and on the Chatham Islands during January–March most years (Miskelly *et al.* 2019, 2023). This species is no longer reportable from the Chatham Islands or eastern South Island.

Fiordland crested penguin (*Eudyptes pachyrhynchus*)

One at Curio Bay, Southland, on 9 Feb 2023 (alongside an erect-crested penguin – Franziska Benz; UBR 2023/010); one at Sumner, Christchurch, on 14 Aug 2023 (Ben Ackerley; UBR 2023/102). Fiordland crested penguins are no longer reportable from the South Island south of Karamea on the west coast and Kaikōura on the east coast.

Snares crested penguin (*Eudyptes robustus*)

One at Ocean Beach, Little Glory, Rakiura/Stewart Island, on 29 Apr 2023 (Brittany Trask; 2023/057) was the first record of this species that the RAC has accepted from Stewart Island, although it has been recorded from Bench Island off the north-east coast (Miskelly *et al.* 2019).

Yellow-eyed penguin (*Megadyptes antipodes*)

One at Kaikōura on 6 Mar & 27 Nov 2023 (Harrison Bowers, Alexandre, Peter & Sandra Kite, Tommy Pedersen, and Maja Pesic Pedersen; UBRs 2023/044 & 2023/133); and one at Wairau diversion mouth, Blenheim, on 23 Apr 2024 (Patrick Crowe and Rowan Hindmarsh-Walls; UBR 2024/043) were north of their usual range (Marchant & Higgins 1990).

Chatham Island albatross (*Thalassarche eremita*)

One east of the Poor Knights Islands on 1 Nov 2023, with two there on 3 Nov 2023, and one on 12 Nov 2023 (Scott Brooks and 23 other observers; UBRs 2023/115, 2023/116 & 2024/032); one at Taiaroa Canyon, off Otago Peninsula, on 22 Jun 2024 (Oscar Thomas and 11 other observers; UBR 2024/048); one at Papanui Canyon, off Otago Peninsula, on 10 Aug 2024 (Oscar Thomas and nine other observers; UBR 2024/069). There are 11 earlier records from New Zealand mainland coastal waters in the RAC database, and at least 10 earlier unreported records (Miskelly *et al.* 2019, 2023). These recent records suggest that the species is regularly present off north-eastern New Zealand during October to December and off Otago in winter. Chatham Island albatross is no longer reportable east of the North and South Islands.

Grey-backed storm petrel (*Garrodia nereis*)

Four east of the Poor Knights Islands on 6 Aug 2023 (Scott Brooks and seven other observers; UBR 2023/096); one off Sinclair Head, Wellington, on 26 Jul 2023 (Oskar Ehrhardt; UBR 2023/100). Grey-backed storm petrel is reportable north of Cook Strait. These are the second and third northern records accepted by the RAC. For earlier northern records, see Gaskin & Baird (2005) and Miskelly (2006).

Black-bellied storm petrel (*Fregetta tropica*)

One east of the Poor Knights Islands on 22 Apr 2024 (Gary Setterfield and two other observers; UBR 2024/031). Black-bellied storm petrel is reportable north of Banks Peninsula. This was the third northern record accepted by the RAC (Miskelly *et al.* 2023).

Kermadec petrel (*Pterodroma neglecta*)

Four collected c. 110 km north-east of Poor Knights Islands on 19 Dec 1858 (UBR 2024/050) was the earliest record near the New Zealand mainland, and was 5 years before the species was named (although four years after the type series was collected at the Meyer Islets, Kermadec Islands, in July 1854: Schlegel 1863; Hoek Ostende *et al.* 1997; Miskelly & Braund 2025). One south-east of Hokoreoro/Rangatira/South East Island, Chatham Islands, on 15 Mar 2023 (Matthias Dehling and Hiroyuki Tanoi; UBR 2023/131) was the first accepted record from the Chatham Islands. One east of the Poor Knights Islands on 28 Jan 2024 (Scott Brooks and three other observers; UBR 2024/035) becomes the sixth accepted record from around New Zealand's main islands (Miskelly *et al.* 2023; Miskelly & Braund 2025).

Soft-plumaged petrel (*Pterodroma mollis*)

Singles east of the Poor Knights Islands on 25 May & 19 Jun 2023 (Scott Brooks and 16 other observers; UBRs 2023/081 & 2023/082). Soft-plumaged petrel is reportable north of Cook Strait. There are seven previous northern records accepted by the RAC (Miskelly *et al.* 2023).

Antarctic prion (*Pachyptila desolata*)

Four east of the Poor Knights Islands on 25 May 2023 (Scott Brooks and nine other observers, images on NZBO; UBR 2023/083). Although commonly found dead on New Zealand beaches (Powlesland 1989), live Antarctic prions are reportable north of Banks Peninsula. There are two previous northern records accepted by the RAC (Miskelly *et al.* 2023).

Wedge-tailed shearwater (*Ardenna pacifica*)

Singles near the Poor Knights Islands on 17 Feb & 9 Dec 2024 (Scott Brooks and ten other observers; UBRs 2024/033 & 2024/109). Within the New Zealand region,

wedge-tailed shearwaters breed only on the Kermadec Islands (Veitch *et al.* 2004). There were three previous live records from coastal waters off the mainland accepted by the RAC (Miskelly *et al.* 2023), and several others have been found dead (Checklist Committee 2022).

Red-tailed tropicbird (*Phaethon rubricauda*)

One at Maunganui Bluff, 90 Mile Beach, Far North, on 15 Feb 2023 (Aaron Skelton, Scott Brooks, and Steve Collins; UBR 2023/014). There were 33 previous accepted mainland records (Checklist Committee 2024).

Black shag (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

Seven at the Snares Islands/Tini Heke on both 27 Nov 2023 and 6 Apr 2024 (Lloyd Esler, Paul Sagar, Graham Parker, and Kalinka Rexer-Huber; UBRs 2023/129 & 2024/036) were the eighth and ninth records from the Snares Islands (CMM, *unpubl. data*). One at Antipodes Island/Moutere Mahue 14–17 Oct 2024 (Jeff White, David Houston, Thomas Mattern, and Myrene Otis; UBR 2024/098) was the first record from Antipodes Island.

Little black shag (*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*)

Two at the Snares Islands/Tini Heke on 7 Apr 2024 (Paul Sagar and Graham Parker; UBR 2024/037) were the third record from the Snares Islands (Miskelly *et al.* 2015).

Nankeen night heron (*Nycticorax caledonicus*)

A juvenile at Waitati, Dunedin, on 26 Oct 2023 (Monica Graham; UBR 2023/110); a juvenile at Ohakune on 16 May 2024 (Mitchell Black; UBR 2024/042). A few nankeen night herons breed along the Whanganui River; they are rarely reported away from there (Frost 2022; Miskelly *et al.* 2023).

Barn owl (*Tyto alba*)

One Purerua, Northland, on 1 Sep 2023 (Andrew Mentor; UBR 2023/106), one at Home Bay, Bream Head Scenic Reserve, Northland, on 22 Jul 2024 (Tom Grinsted; UBR 2024/055), and one at Ponsonby, Auckland, on 20 Aug 2024 (Natalie Barnes and Courtney Dawson; UBR 2024/060) were all well east or south of the known distribution of New Zealand's only known barn owl population (around Kaitaia; Hyde *et al.* 2020).

Kākā (*Nestor meridionalis*)

One at Oxford, North Canterbury, on 25 Aug 2024 (Christian Cosgrove; UBR 2024/062) and one at Bortons Pond, east of Duntroon, Waitaki River, on 26 Dec 2024 (Liz van den Ende, Arthur & Arron Green; UBR 2024/112) were 40 to 90 km from known kākā breeding populations.

Records not accepted, or held in suspense

Some of the following records may have been correct, but were insufficiently documented to be accepted by the Records Appraisal Committee. At least eight were considered to be misidentifications.

Emu (*Dromaius novaehollandiae*)

Twenty emu north of Lake Huro, Rēkohu/Wharekauri/Chatham Island on 1 Aug 2019 (UBR 2023/034), were readily identifiable. The Checklist Committee intends to consider whether emu should be added to the New Zealand list during the next revision of the checklist.

Plumed whistling duck (*Dendrocygna eytoni*)

One reported at Ashley River/Rakahuri, North Canterbury, on 2 Jan 2024 (UBR 2024/002).

Chestnut teal (*Anas castanea*)

One reported at Playhouse Ponds, Tasman, on 19 Jan 2024 (UBR 2024/013).

Grey teal (*Anas gracilis*) x Australasian shoveler (*Spatula variegata*) hybrid

An unusual duck photographed at Masterton on 15 Jun 2024 (UBR 2024/047) was considered likely to be a hybrid, possibly between a grey teal (*Anas gracilis*) and an Australasian shoveler (*Spatula variegata*) as claimed in the submission.

Northern shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*) x Australasian shoveler (*S. variegata*) hybrid

Male shovelers photographed at Pegasus Wetlands, North Canterbury, on 24 Jul 2022 (UBR 2024/071) and at Tip Lagoon, Invercargill, on 9 Sep 2023 (UBR 2024/070) were both considered to be possible hybrids between these two species.

White-headed pigeon (*Columba leucomela*)

A pigeon photographed at Te Kao, Far North, on 4 Nov 2024 (UBR 2024/096) was considered to be a white-headed pigeon by a majority of RAC members, but did not have the unanimous agreement required for a new species to be added to the New Zealand list.

Fan-tailed cuckoo (*Cacomantis flabelliformis*)

One reported from Belfast, Christchurch, on 3 Nov 2024 (UBR 2024/093) was identified from a photograph as a female Eurasian blackbird (*Turdus merula*).

White-rumped swiftlet (*Aerodramus spodiopygius*)

A swift photographed on Antipodes Island on 6 Dec 2024 (UBR 2024/105) was considered to be a fork-tailed swift (see under that species, renumbered as UBR 2024/113).

Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*)

A call heard at night on Hokoreoro/Rangatira/South East Island, Chatham Islands, on 7 Feb 2023 (UBR 2023/087) was considered a possible record of a whimbrel.

Hudsonian godwit (*Limosa haemastica*)

One reported from Pararekau, Manukau Harbour, on 26 Jan 2020 (UBR 2024/061).

Sharp-tailed sandpiper (*Calidris acuminata*)

A sandpiper photographed at Manukapua/Big Sand Island, Kaipara Harbour, on 21 Nov 2009 (UBR 2024/090) was considered unidentifiable from the images provided.

Red-necked phalarope (*Phalaropus fulicarius*)

One reported from Hot Water Beach, Whitianga, on 1 Jan 2023 (UBR 2023/002) was identified from photographs as a New Zealand dotterel (*Anarhynchus obscurus*).

Grey plover (*Pluvialis squatarola*)

One reported from Puketutu, Manukau Harbour, on 9 Jan 2021 (UBR 2024/064).

Long-tailed skua (*Stercorarius longicaudus*)

Singles reported from Te Haumi River mouth, Far North, on 26 Feb 2024 (UBR 2024/041) and Rothesay Bay, North Shore, Auckland, on 19 Apr 2024 (UBR 2024/030).

Whiskered tern (*Chlidonias hybridus*)

One reported from Walker Island, Kaipara Harbour, on 17 Jun 2023 (UBR 2024/104).

Common tern (*Sterna hirundo*)

One reported from Gulf Harbour, Whangaparāoa, on 26 Feb 2023 (UBR 2023/027). One found dead at Kaika Beach, Moeraki, Otago, on 9 Feb 2024 (UBR 2024/016) was identified from photographs as a juvenile white-fronted tern (*Sterna striata*).

Arctic tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)

Five reported 30–50km west of Rakiura/Stewart Island on 15 Apr 2023 (UBR 2023/125), and one in Queen Charlotte Sound, Marlborough Sounds, on 11 Oct 2023 (UBR 2024/025).

Antarctic tern (*Sterna vittata*)

One reported from Waitarakao/Washdyke Lagoon, south Canterbury, on 28 Dec 2022 (UBR 2023/024), and one from Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere outlet, Canterbury, on 27 Feb 2024 (UBR 2024/066).

Kerguelen petrel (*Lugensa brevirostris*)

Fifteen reported off Cape Palliser, Wairarapa, on 29 Jun 2021 (UBR 2023/077), and one from the Abel Tasman Track, Tasman Bay, on 12 Feb 2023 (UBR 2023/071).

Pycroft's petrel (*Pterodroma pycrofti*)

Two reported off the Canterbury coast on 17 Dec 2022 (UBR 2023/022), and one 25 km south of the Snares Islands/Tini Heke on 3 Jan 2023 (UBR 2023/029).

Salvin's prion (*Pachyptila salvini*)

One reported at South Traps Reef, south of Rakiura/Stewart Island, on 9 Jun 2023 (UBR 2023/080).

Black petrel (*Procellaria parkinsoni*)

One reported 15 km off Taiaroa Head, Otago, on 8 Oct 2023 (UBR 2023/108).

Little shearwater (*Puffinus assimilis*)

One reported off the Canterbury coast on 17 Dec 2022 (UBR 2023/021).

Whenua Hou diving petrel (*Pelecanoides georgicus whenuahouensis*)

One reported off Rabbit Island, Tasman Bay, on 11 Nov 2023 (UBR 2023/118) was identified as a Cape petrel (*Daption capense*) from the image provided.

Great frigatebird (*Fregata minor*)

A frigatebird seen at Collingwood-Pūponga Main Road, Golden Bay, on 30 Jan 2023 (UBR 2023/049) was accepted as a frigatebird species (*Fregata* sp.).

Masked booby (*Sula dactylatra*)

One reported at Pahi, Kaipara Harbour, on 19 Feb 2023 (UBRs 2023/013 & 2023/094).

Darter (*Anhinga melanogaster*)

One reported at New Brighton pier, Christchurch, on 22 Feb 2023 (UBR 2023/020).

Black shag (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

One reported at Perseverance Harbour, Campbell Island/Motu Ihupuku, on 4 Dec 2023 (UBR 2024/001).

White-faced heron (*Egretta novaehollandiae*)

One reported at Port Ross, Auckland Islands/Motu Maha, on 28 Nov 2023 (UBR 2023/128).

Yellow-billed spoonbill (*Platalea flavipes*)

One reported at Waioeka River, Bay of Plenty, on 4 Feb 2024 (UBR 2024/029).

White ibis (*Threskiornis molucca*)

One reported at Manurewa, Auckland, on 24 May 2024 (UBR 2024/044).

Eastern osprey (*Pandion cristatus*)

One reported at Wade River Road, Whangaparāoa, on 24 Jan 2023 (UBR 2023/009).

Eastern marsh harrier (*Circus spilonotus*)

One reported at Waipu Cove, North Auckland, on 2 Nov 1996 (UBR 2024/028).

Laughing kookaburra (*Dacelo novaeguineae*)

One reported at Ngātimoti, Motueka River, on 21 Jan 2023 (UBR 2023/006), and another at Waipara, North Canterbury, on 28 May 2023 (UBR 2023/067).

Rainbow bee-eater (*Merops ornatus*)

Two reported at Cockle Bay, Auckland, on 16 May 2023 (UBR 2023/065) were considered likely to have been sacred kinkfishers (*Todiramphus sanctus*).

Nankeen kestrel (*Falco cenchroides*)

One reported at Lindis Valley, Otago, on 4 Feb 2024 (UBR 2024/019).

Rifleman (*Acanthisitta chloris*)

Two reported at Karekare, West Auckland, on 15 Mar 2024 (UBR 2024/063).

Blue-faced honeyeater (*Entomyzon cyanotis*)

One reported at Crofton Downs, Wellington, on 11 Nov 2024 (UBR 2024/097).

North Island kokako (*Callaeas wilsoni*)

One reported at Bledisloe Park, Palmerston North, on 11 Jun 2024 (UBR 2024/046) was considered likely to have been a kererū | New Zealand pigeon (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*).

Hihi (*Notiomystis cincta*)

Two reported at Lake Moeraki, West Coast, South Island, on 4 Apr 2023 (UBR 2023/048) were considered likely to have been tomtits (*Petroica macrocephala*). One reported at Glenbrook, South Auckland, on 19 Oct 2024 (UBR 2024/088).

Tree martin (*Petrochelidon nigricans*)

One reported at Huapai, West Auckland, on 20 Jan 2022 (UBR 2024/067), and two reported at Lyell Valley, Buller, on 6 Jan 2024 (UBR 2024/003).

Unidentified bird

Two records submitted as unidentified birds were identified from photographs as an oil-stained red-billed gull (*Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*, UBR 2024/083) and a grey warbler (*Gerygone igata*, UBR 2023/098).

DISCUSSION

The Records Appraisal Committee received 247 Unusual Bird Reports between January 2023 and December 2024, at an average rate of 10.3 per month. This was the highest reporting rate in the history of the reporting scheme (up from 9.2 per month received during 2017–18; Miskelly *et al.* 2019). Excluding one report of a 'non-reportable' species, a total of 194 UBRs were accepted (78.9%), which was similar to the acceptance rate of 79.5% for 880 submissions over the previous decade (Miskelly *et al.* 2015, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2023).

Common tern was the most-reported species during the 2-year period of 2023–24, with 16 UBRs received (and 14 accepted). Regular observations by an experienced observer on the Wellington west coast over the past four decades indicate that common terns are being seen more regularly and in larger numbers (Alan Tennyson, *pers. obs*). We therefore consider that the high reporting rate in

2023-24 was due to more common terns reaching New Zealand on migration, as well as birders are becoming more aware and proficient at searching for and identifying common terns among the very similar white-fronted terns that they generally associate with.

In addition to common tern, species reported (and accepted) in exceptional numbers in 2023-24 included 12 little tern UBRs and 10 for Australasian little grebe. The little tern records were all from the South Island, and have prompted the RAC to modify the 'reportable' status for little tern (it remains reportable for Rakiura/Stewart Island and outlying island groups). The Australasian little grebe reports were mainly from the South Island (eight UBRs from six localities), and were all between March 2023 and June 2024. Breeding has not been confirmed in the South Island since 1996-97, although breeding likely continued until about 2007 (Miskelly *et al.* 2015). The three birds present at Lake Murray, Tekapo, in January 2024, were considered to be adults (Rohan Clarke in UBR 2024-010a), and so were not evidence of breeding.

A feature of the 2023-24 reporting period was the large number of submissions arising from pelagic seabirding trips, including 20 UBRs from east of the Poor Knights Islands (trips organised by Scott Brooks), and five from the Papanui and Taiaroa Canyons off Otago Peninsula. Together, these trips were the source of about 10% of submitted UBRs, and 13% of accepted UBRs, with most of these 'pelagic' UBRs being supported by good quality photographs. These trips continue to improve our understanding of seabird distribution around New Zealand, with the most notable pelagic record during 2023-24 being the first live sighting (and second record) of streaked shearwater from New Zealand. They also provide evidence that some species are more regular in these areas than previously realised, which allows us to modify the reportable bird list accordingly, such as dropping Chatham Island albatross as a reportable species east of mainland New Zealand.

The most notable records during 2023-24 were the addition of Horsfield's bronze-cuckoo, MacGillivray's prion, and the Asian subspecies of gull-billed tern (*G. n. affinis*) to the New Zealand list. The circumstances of discovery and the significance of the cuckoo and prion records have been reported elsewhere (Galbraith & Gill 2025; Miskelly *et al.* 2025). *G. n. affinis* is a regular migrant to northern Australia, straying as far south as New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia (Lilleyman & Hensen 2014; Menkhorst *et al.* 2017). It is smaller than the Australian-breeding *G. n. macrotarsa*, with a smaller bill, and a smaller black eye-patch when in non-breeding plumage (Rogers *et al.* 2005; Lilleyman & Hensen 2014; Menkhorst *et al.* 2017). Note that *macrotarsa* is sometimes treated as a full species, with the common name of Australian tern (Mlodinow 2023).

The addition of Horsfield's bronze-cuckoo and MacGillivray's prion increases the number of bird species recorded naturally from New Zealand since AD 1800 to 362 (Checklist Committee 2024; Miskelly *et al.* 2024). Of these, 16 are considered extinct. In addition, 35 introduced species are currently considered established in the wild in New Zealand, making the current avifauna 381 species (including 25 migrant species that breed elsewhere, and 143 vagrant species; see Townsend *et al.* 2008 for definitions).

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