

Birds New Zealand – OSNZ  
National Wader Census  
June - July 2024  
November - December 2024  
February 2025  
Summary compiled by Adrian Riegen

### Winter Census 2024

A total of 99,987 waders of 19 species were counted during the June-July 2024 wader census, (Table 1), up from the 90,663 in 2023 but very similar to the 2022 winter count of 99,553. National coverage was good with only the Far North, North Kaipara and Porangahau not counted mainly due to lack of people.

South Island Pied Oystercatchers have been declining steadily over recent years but the winter 2024 count of 48,792 was an improvement on the 45,200 counted in 2023. The Variable Oystercatcher population continues to increase with a record 4,627 counted in 2024. The Variable Oystercatcher count is not a true reflection of the total population as many stay on the breeding grounds during winter and are not counted. The Bar-tailed Godwit number at 12,163 was the highest since 2020. Five sites, Kaipara Harbour, Manukau Harbour, Firth of Thames, Tauranga Harbour and Farewell Spit hold around 70% of overwintering godwits each year.

The Banded Dotterel count of 6,131 was up from 5,779 in 2023 and the highest count since 2011. The winter strongholds were Farewell Spit 915, Kaipara Harbour 724, Southland 659, Kawhia Harbour 523, Manukau Harbour 367 and Lake Ellesmere 352.

Only the Southern New Zealand Dotterels that move to the South Island from Stewart Island in the winter were counted with just 30 seen in 2024. 1,177 Northern New Zealand Dotterels were counted including 350 on the Coromandel and 224 at Mangawhai. A count is also undertaken at selected post-breeding flocking sites in March each year, which also gives a good indication of the status of the population.

The 1,327 Red Knot counted in 2024 was a considerable improvement over the past three years and the 681 counted in the Manukau Harbour accounts for 50% of the total.

The Ruddy Turnstone count of 77 was lowest since 66 were counted in 2007.

Wrybill numbers are reasonably steady with 4,529 counted in 2024, with 2,324 on the Firth of Thames and 1,747 on the Manukau Harbour and combined accounting for 90% of the total count.

Uncommon winter waders included, 19 Red-necked Stint, 12 Whimbrel, 2 Eastern Curlew, 1 Black-tailed Godwit, 1 Sanderling and 1 Semipalmated Plover.

### Summer Census 2024

A total of 138,936 waders of 25 species were counted during the November-December 2024 wader census, (Table 2), compared to 133,994 counted in 2023. This is an increase on the previous two summer counts and the highest count since 2013. National coverage was quite good but the key Far North sites were once again not counted. Gisborne/Wairoa and Manawatu were also not counted. Coverage of some smaller areas particularly along Auckland's east coast are increasingly well covered and although numbers at each site may not be particularly high, these counts do at least show the importance of small sites for a range of wader species, particularly Bar-tailed Godwit, Pied and Variable Oystercatchers and New Zealand Dotterel.

The Coromandel, which is particularly good for the aforementioned species is now being counted regularly, which is good to see as 2,602 waders were counted at ten locations this year. Bar-tailed Godwit 1,924, New Zealand Dotterel 124 and Variable Oystercatchers 368.

Bar-tailed Godwit numbers were up again this year with 86,523 counted, compared to 79,340 in 2023 and 81,769 in 2022. Counts of over 5,000 were recorded at; Manukau Harbour 14,505, Kaipara Harbour 13,016, Farewell Spit 11,178, Tauranga Harbour 6,280 and Southland 5,338.

The 26,032 Red Knot counted was another improvement on the 24,935 in 2023 and 21,658 in 2022. It would be good to think the population decline has been halted thanks to better protection of staging sites in East Asia, but it is probably a bit early to be sure of this. Strongholds for Red Knot continue to be Farewell Spit 8,930, Manukau Harbour 8,495, Kaipara Harbour 5,975, Firth of Thames 1,160 and Tasman Bay 658, which together account for 97% of all Red Knots counted.

Ruddy Turnstone numbers were down to 913 compared to 1,777 in 2023 and 1,404 in 2022. This is the lowest ever even beating the 2012 count of 914. The strongholds for Ruddy Turnstone were, Farewell Spit 279, Kaipara Harbour 235 and Manukau Harbour 177.

All other arctic waders were in very low numbers with only 154 Pacific Golden Plover, 23 Red-necked Stint, 20 Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and 19 Whimbrel counted.

Other arctic rarities were; Eastern Curlew 4, Hudsonian Godwit 2, Grey-tailed Tattler 2, Sanderling 2, Greater Sand Plover 2, Lesser Sand Plover 1, Curlew Sandpiper 1 and Marsh Sandpiper 1.

**NOTE:** Species listed in the following tables follow the order they appear in the fifth edition of The Checklist of the Birds of New Zealand 2022.

**Table 1. Total Wader Count June - July 2024**

<b>Species</b>	<b>2024</b>	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Variable Oystercatcher	<b>4,627</b>	3,977	3,792	4,439	4,238	4,196	3,307	3,636
South Island Pied Oystercatcher	<b>48,792</b>	45,200	56,074	56,323	68,207	67,327	69,105	73,172
(Oystercatcher Hybrid)	<b>27</b>	32	16	30	23	18	6	15
Pied Stilt	<b>18,755</b>	17,818	15,707	18,008	17,127	16,764	18,621	14,181
(Black Stilt/Hybrids)	<b>7</b>	8	7	12	17	17	6	21
Pacific Golden Plover					5			
New Zealand Dotterel	<b>1,207</b>	942	861	1,151	999	1,176	865	777
Banded Dotterel	<b>6,131</b>	5,779	4,926	4,797	5,369	6,041	5,100	5,334
Semipalmated Plover *	<b>1</b>							
Lesser Sand Plover			2					
Greater Sand Plover				2	1	2		
Wrybill	<b>4,529</b>	4,534	5,147	4,100	3,571	4,420	5,325	4,718
Black-fronted Dotterel	<b>238</b>	16	66	240	78	41	93	97
Spur-winged Plover	<b>2,071</b>	2,177	1,980	2,954	1,589	1,891	2,587	2,683
Eastern Curlew	<b>2</b>		1	1		3	1	1
Whimbrel	<b>12</b>	5	1	1	31	3	3	2
Bar-tailed Godwit	<b>12,163</b>	9,420	10,231	9,859	12,813	4,864	5,216	7,033
Black-tailed Godwit	<b>1</b>	1			1		1	1
Hudsonian Godwit			1	1		1		
Ruddy Turnstone	<b>77</b>	214	106	210	410	462	137	322
Great Knot						1	1	
Red Knot	<b>1,327</b>	525	632	1,938	1,761	1,020	2,341	1,150
Ruff					1			
Curlew Sandpiper				1				2
Red-necked Stint	<b>19</b>	14	1	4	36	18	10	5
Sanderling	<b>1</b>		1	1	1	4		2
Terek Sandpiper		1	1	1				
Grey-tailed Tattler					1	1		3
Marsh Sandpiper								
<b>Total</b>	<b>99,987</b>	90,663	99,553	104,073	116,369	108,270	112,725	113,155

**Table 2. Total Wader Count November - December 2024**

<b>Species</b>	<b>2024</b>	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Variable Oystercatcher	<b>3,091</b>	3,226	2,620	2,438	2,866	2,659	2,679	2,275
South Island Pied Oystercatcher	<b>13,058</b>	14,370	12,901	15,981	18,708	14,319	13,578	18,978
(Oystercatcher Hybrid)	<b>19</b>	13	23	23	13	22	11	10
Pied Stilt	<b>4,708</b>	6,847	4,838	5,999	6,519	8,218	4,683	5,325
(Black Stilt/Hybrids)		5	5	5	6	5	44	5
Pacific Golden Plover	<b>154</b>	167	175	156	122	224	220	266
Grey Plover							1	
New Zealand Dotterel	<b>714</b>	534	518	362	600	568	547	497
Banded Dotterel	<b>514</b>	420	418	546	597	711	278	664
Lesser Sand Plover	<b>1</b>				1			
Greater Sand Plover	<b>2</b>	2	2	5	3	3	1	
Wrybill	<b>355</b>	86	79	200	62	634	348	273
Black-fronted Dotterel	<b>47</b>	17	30	25	43	25	27	16
Shore Plover			1			69		
Spur-winged Plover	<b>2,727</b>	2,141	1,590	1,937	2,113	1,696	1,001	2,073
Eastern Curlew	<b>4</b>	3	4	4	5	5	2	7
Whimbrel	<b>19</b>	19	13	27	47	65	18	28
Bar-tailed Godwit	<b>86,523</b>	79,340	81,937	65,859	78,218	74,456	65,345	71,527
Black-tailed Godwit			1			8		3
Hudsonian Godwit	<b>2</b>	2	1			1	1	2
Ruddy Turnstone	<b>913</b>	1,777	1,404	1,309	1,688	2,468	1,497	1,934
Great Knot		1			1	1		

Red Knot	<b>26,032</b>	24,935	21,658	27,060	25,698	26,775	33,563	30,947
Broad-billed Sandpiper						1		
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	<b>20</b>	15	10	18	17	9	15	15
Pectoral Sandpiper	<b>4</b>		1	1	1	7	3	1
Curlew Sandpiper	<b>1</b>	5	1	2	4	1	1	2
Red-necked Stint	<b>23</b>	64	42	53	76	87	53	24
Sanderling	<b>2</b>	2	1	3		3	5	4
Terek Sandpiper				2		1		
Grey-tailed Tattler	<b>2</b>	2	1	1	1	1	1	2
Common Greenshank					1			
Marsh Sandpiper	<b>1</b>	1			1	1		2
<b>Total</b>	<b>138,936</b>	133,994	128,937	122,016	137,411	133,031	123,922	134,880

### Wader Count February-March 2025

A total of 99,229 waders were counted in Northland, Whangateau Harbour, Gisborne/Wairoa, Aotea and Kawhia Harbours, Lake Wairarapa, Nelson, Canterbury, West Coast and Southland in February 2025. Comparisons are made between the November 2024 and February 2025 counts for Nelson, Southland and Lake Ellesmere in Tables 3, 4 & 5.

**Table 3. Nelson Region count Nov 2024 and Feb 2025**

<b>Species</b>	<b>Feb.25</b>	<b>Nov 24</b>
Variable Oystercatcher	<b>1,195</b>	673
South Island Pied Oystercatcher	<b>19,744</b>	3,646
Pied Stilt	<b>692</b>	71
Pacific Golden Plover	<b>41</b>	30
Banded Dotterel	<b>941</b>	42
Lesser Sand Plover		1
Greater Sand Plover	<b>3</b>	1
Wrybill	<b>13</b>	
Spur-winged Plover	<b>69</b>	84
Whimbrel	<b>1</b>	3
Bar-tailed Godwit	<b>20,737</b>	16,725
Ruddy Turnstone	<b>724</b>	361
Red Knot	<b>10,834</b>	9,608
Sanderling	<b>1</b>	1
Red-necked Stint	<b>2</b>	4
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	<b>1</b>	
Pectoral Sandpiper		1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>54,998</b>	31,251

**Table 4. Southland count Nov 2024 and Feb 2025**

<b>Species</b>	<b>Feb.25</b>	<b>Nov 24</b>
Variable Oystercatcher	<b>34</b>	41
South Island Pied Oystercatcher	<b>4,814</b>	965
Pied Stilt	<b>256</b>	9
Pacific Golden Plover	<b>3</b>	37
New Zealand Dotterel	<b>31</b>	
Banded Dotterel	<b>145</b>	6
Wrybill	<b>1</b>	1
Spur-winged Plover	<b>87</b>	38
Eastern Curlew	<b>2</b>	2
Bar-tailed Godwit	<b>6,497</b>	5,338
Ruddy Turnstone	<b>202</b>	78
Red Knot	<b>129</b>	1
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	<b>12</b>	
Pectoral Sandpiper	<b>1</b>	
Red-necked Stint	<b>19</b>	
Grey-tailed Tattler	<b>2</b>	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12,295</b>	6,418

**Table 5. Lake Ellesmere count Nov 2024 and Feb 2025**

<b>Species</b>	<b>Feb.25</b>	<b>Nov 24</b>
Variable Oystercatcher		4
South Island Pied Oystercatcher	<b>40</b>	36
Pied Stilt	<b>3,965</b>	1,357
Black Stilt/Hybrids	<b>20</b>	
Pacific Golden Plover	<b>59</b>	45
Banded Dotterel	<b>1,871</b>	303
Wrybill	<b>200</b>	183
Spur-winged Plover	<b>339</b>	1,051
Bar-tailed Godwit	<b>277</b>	224
Ruddy Turnstone		36
Red Knot	<b>9</b>	13
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	<b>18</b>	12
Pectoral Sandpiper		3
Red-necked Stint	<b>48</b>	17
Marsh Sandpiper	<b>1</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6,847</b>	3,284

Full analysis of the wader counts 2005-2019 can be found in Wader Studies in New Zealand, *Notornis* Vol 67 Part 4, December 2020.

Adrian Riegen  
29 March 2025

## Birds New Zealand – OSNZ Waterbird Counts 2024

Whilst counting waders, people in most regions also count water and wetland birds and although these data come nowhere near indicating the total numbers for most species they are of interest and do show the diversity of birds using the same habitat as waders. They also show local trends and when species like Canada Goose and Royal Spoonbill first appeared at certain sites and how their numbers have increased. These data are stored on a Birds NZ database and are available on request, subject to conditions. The attached tables show numbers counted in winter and summer 2024.

Adrian Riegen  
March 2025

**Table 1. Waterbird counts June/July 2024**[illegible]

Table 2. Waterbird counts November/December 2024

OSNZ Summer Waterbird Census Totals 2024																																															
NOV - DEC 2024	Site & Overall Total >>																																														
		Preangara	Hobson H	Bangaru - Karaiti	Whangarei Harbour	Ruakaka/Waipu	North Kaipara	South Kaipara	Mangawhai	Onakea	Auckland East Coast	Waitemata/Tamaki/Whi	Manukia Harbour	Firth of Thames	Coromandel	Tairāngia Harbour	Hokitika	Ohara	Eastern Bay of Plenty	Gisborne/Wairoa	Hawkes Bay	Southern Hawkes Bay	Port Waikato	Aotea Harbour	Kaitake Harbour	Bay of Plenty	Whangarei & Others	Manawatu	Lake Waikarepa	Taranaki Bay	Golden Bay	Parengi Spit	Westhaven Inlet	Kaitake Harbour	Canterbury	Avon-Heathcote	Lake Ellesmere	West Coast	Otago	Southland	Chatham Islands						
	56,209	0	0	4,257	95	0	3,385	862	72	162	1,605	9,110	3,356	1,444	4,718	3,654	434	526	0	1,258	0	0	286	745	508	0	0	5,369	1,602	848	396	7	3,750	2,605	35	916	264	3,789	151	0	0						
Mute Swan	18					2																																									
Black Swan	16,893				2	1647	2		80	991	5,735	71	154	159	48						119																										
Cape Barren Goose	6																																														
Greylag Goose	43																																														
Canada Goose	1,383						293	1	13	28	159	48	1	51	26																																
Paradise Shelduck	1,417						360	8	22	22	159	63	35	17	119																																
Brown Teal	62																																														
Grey Teal	1,407						5																																								
Mallard	2,433				50	28			144	1	2	8	46	730	442	56	83	72	17	8																											
Grey Duck	4						2																																								
Mallard/Grey Duck	90																																														
Australasian Shoveler	1,254																																														
Northern Shoveler	0																																														
New Zealand Scaup	588							21																																							
Great Crested Grebe	2																																														
Hoary-headed grebe	0																																														
Dabchick	9																																														
Australasian Grebe	0																																														
White-capped Albatross	0																																														
Australian Pelican	0																																														
Australasian Gannet	9							5	1																																						
Fluttering Shearwater	0																																														
Little Shag	403				2	1		3	5	1		22	17	45	5	14			1	2	19																										
Black Shag	313				1		3	5	1																																						
Pied Shag	1,131				8	9		3	22	10	1	61	161	609	17	14	26	21	1																												
Little Black Shag	113				1							19	20	4	6	2	11		10	13																											
Otago Shag	7																																														
Spotted Shag	30																																														
White Heron	1																																														
Cattle Egret	0																																														
Intermediate Egret	0																																														
White-faced Heron	1,242				42	1		83	2	15	3	52	324	321	91	37	33	24	2	31																											
Little Egret	1																																														
Reef Heron	1																																														
Bittern	1																																														
Glossy Ibis	1																																														
Royal Spoonbill	1,730				38	3		38	18	11	10	12	117	205	43	39	91	44	6	35																											
Banded Rail	1																																														
Marsh Crake	0																																														
Weka	0																																														
Pukeko	523							69				80	118	114					1	7																											
Coot	0																																														
Southern Skua	0																																														
Arctic Skua	0																																														
Pomarine Skua	1																																														
Long-tailed Skua	0																																														
Southern Black-backed Gull	4,134				27	40		167	167	8	7	74	215	200	35	228	101	108	103	384																											
Red-billed Gull	15,800				4,084			474	14	7	181	209	179	914	3,606	3075	75	223	54																												
Black-billed Gull	2,658					9		55	13	5	2	689	292		3	17		24	41																												
Little Tern	17																																														
Fairy Tern	16																																														
Gull-billed Tern	4																																														
Caspian Tern	1,215				1	2		49	65	3	5	8	230	10	14	99	5	34	1																												