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

Species	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Variable Oystercatcher	4,627	3,977	3,792	4,439	4,238	4,196	3,307	3,636
South Island								3,030
Pied Oystercatcher	48,792	45,200	56,074	56,323	68,207	67,327	69,105	73,172
(Oystercatcher Hybrid)	27	32	16	30	23	18	6	15
Pied Stilt	18,755	17,818	15,707	18,008	17,127	16,764	18,621	14,181
(Black Stilt/Hybrids)	7	8	7	12	17	17	6	21
Pacific Golden Plover					5			
New Zealand Dotterel	1,207	942	861	1,151	999	1,176	865	777
Banded Dotterel	6,131	5,779	4,926	4,797	5,369	6,041	5,100	5,334
Semipalmated Plover *	1							
Lesser Sand Plover			2					
Greater Sand Plover				2	1	2		
Wrybill	4,529	4,534	5,147	4,100	3,571	4,420	5,325	4,718
Black-fronted Dotterel	238	16	66	240	78	41	93	97
Spur-winged Plover	2,071	2,177	1,980	2,954	1,589	1,891	2,587	2,683
Eastern Curlew	2		1	1		3	1	1
Whimbrel	12	5	1	1	31	3	3	2
Bar-tailed Godwit	12,163	9,420	10,231	9,859	12,813	4,864	5,216	7,033
Black-tailed Godwit	1	1			1		1	1
Hudsonian Godwit			1	1		1		
Ruddy Turnstone	77	214	106	210	410	462	137	322
Great Knot						1	1	
Red Knot	1,327	525	632	1,938	1,761	1,020	2,341	1,150
Ruff					1			
Curlew Sandpiper				1				2
Red-necked Stint	19	14	1	4	36	18	10	5
Sanderling	1		1	1	1	4		2
Terek Sandpiper		1	1	1				
Grey-tailed Tattler					1	1		3
Marsh Sandpiper								<u> </u>
Total	99,987	90,663	99,553	104,073	116,369	108,270	112,725	113,155

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

Species	2024	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Variable Oystercatcher	3,091	3,226	2,620	2,438	2,866	2,659	2,679	2,275
South Island								
Pied Oystercatcher	13,058	14,370	12,901	15,981	18,708	14,319	13,578	18,978
(Oystercatcher Hybrid)	19	13	23	23	13	22	11	10
Pied Stilt	4,708	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	154	167	175	156	122	224	220	266
Grey Plover							1	
New Zealand Dotterel	714	534	518	362	600	568	547	497
Banded Dotterel	514	420	418	546	597	711	278	664
Lesser Sand Plover	1				1			
Greater Sand Plover	2	2	2	5	3	3	1	
Wrybill	355	86	79	200	62	634	348	273
Black-fronted Dotterel	47	17	30	25	43	25	27	16
Shore Plover			1			69		
Spur-winged Plover	2,727	2,141	1,590	1.937	2,113	1,696	1,001	2,073
Eastern Curlew	4	3	4	4	5	5	2	7
Whimbrel	19	19	13	27	47	65	18	28
Bar-tailed Godwit	86,523	79,340	81,937	65,859	78,218	74,456	65,345	71,527
Black-tailed Godwit			1			8		3
Hudsonian Godwit	2	2	1			1	1	2
Ruddy Turnstone	913	1,777	1,404	1,309	1,688	2,468	1,497	1,934
Great Knot		1			1	1		

Red Knot	26,032	24,935	21,658	27,060	25,698	26,775	33,563	30,947
Broad-billed Sandpiper						1		
Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	20	15	10	18	17	9	15	15
Pectoral Sandpiper	4		1	1	1	7	3	1
Curlew Sandpiper	1	5	1	2	4	1	1	2
Red-necked Stint	23	64	42	53	76	87	53	24
Sanderling	2	2	1	3		3	5	4
Terek Sandpiper				2		1		
Grey-tailed Tattler	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	2
Common Greenshank					1			
Marsh Sandpiper	1	1			1	1		2
Total	138,936	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

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

Table 4. Southland count Nov 2024 and Feb 2025

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

Table 5. Lake Ellesmere count Nov 2024 and Feb 2025

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

		os	NZ Winter W	aterbir	d Cens	us To	tals 20	24			7																													
11NK. 111x 2024			rarengarenga Houhora H Rangaunu - Karikari =	Whangarei	Ruakaka/Waipu	North Kaipara	South Kaipara	Mangawhai	Omaha	Auckland East Coast	Waitemata/Tamaki/Wi	Manukau Harbour	Firth of Thames	Coromandel	Tauranga Harbour	Maketu	Ohiwa	Gisborne/Wairoa	Hawkes Bay	Southern Hawkes Bay	Port Walkato	Aotea Harbour	Kawhia Harbour	Ragian Harbour	Whanganul Estuary	Manawatu Estuary	Manawatu Region	Lake Wairarapa	Tasman Bay	Golden Bay	Farewell Spit	Westhaven Inlet	Kaikoura/Marlborough	Canterbury	Avon-Heathcote	Lake Ellesmere	West Coast	Otago	Southland	Chatman Islands
Site & Overall Total >>	56,745		0 0 0 0	599	362	0 °	3,946	630	99	329	1,990	7,710	3,471	1,159	1,993	1,226	24	734	3,343		(NC)	783	1,314	975	162	208	1,475	5,693	3,229	848	605	1	<sup>4</sup> ,835	4,310	16	823	386	3,236	14	0
Mute Swan	53						2																											37		14				
Black Swan	7,259			69	1		361	12		34	342	1,636	34	110	38	59		137	179			8	87	1			85	3,653	75		89		57				8	184		
Cape Barren Goose																																								
Greylag Goose	154									1									77									43										33		
Canada Goose Paradise Shelduck	7,025						1,001	200	3	20		1,175	406 143	48		40			1,029			200	907	4/3				617			40		567				8	42 179		
Brown Teal	102			- 4	2		947	300	3	20	26	144	143	102	19	13		13	4			4	2				6	29	33		40		36				18	179		
Grey Teal	1,487							4				442	104	102	5				304								141		57				4					425		
Mallard	3,519			188	16		120		8	27	61	593	289	156		472	43	16				7	18	17	8		29		505	6			122				139			
Grey Duck	50			100	10		2	1,2			- 01	575	203	150	50	172	- 1.	2	557			- 1	10	Δ,	-		40		6				166				100	237		
Mallard/Grey Duck	4						-											_	4										-											
Australasian Shoveler	1,217							6				87	160	6	325			3									2		118		25							99		
Northern Shoveler																																								
New Zealand Scaup	1,118						82					33			90				7										906											
Great Crested Grebe																																								
Hoary-headed grebe																																								
Dabchick	199							1		6	1	36			10				42			1						90	10					2						
Australasian Grebe	260						2																											258						
White-capped Albatross																																								
Australian Pelican																																								
Australasian Gannet	28													6				1					2								18							1		
Brown Booby	641				7		-	-	-	5													2			-											-			
Little Shag Black Shag	300			1			8 15		1	- 5	22	120	21 34	31	8	21	-	11	18			- 1	2	1	2	3	4		20	4			1	28 12		11 51		238		
Pied Shag	1,502			7			17		5	3	49		541	53	4			25	5			5	20	40	12	23	43		46	8	4		12	64		171		22		
Little Black Shag	207			8			1	32	- 3	,	21		15	9	34	/3		9	25			- 3	3	1	12	2.3	43	28	12		- 4		12	13		5		- 22		
Otago Shag	9			- 0			-						- 13					- 1	- 20					-				2.0	- 12				- 1	13				9		
Spotted Shag	28																												9					10				9		
White Heron	18						2					1							1										1	1				3		5	4			
Cattle Egret	19																														1					18				
Intermediate Egret																																								
White-faced Heron	1,362			3			178		2	4	72	319	248	28	63	17		55	11			5	9	31			1	18	47	28			51	55		57	22	28	9	
Little Egret	3													1	1												1													
Reef Heron	5											1	1									1	1	1																
Bittern	2																											1								1				
Glossy Ibis	1												1																											
Royal Spoonbill	2,347			120	12		323		30	26	84	721	238	66	186	83	2:	14	21				73	27	1	16	28	44	67	47			21	13		33	17	8	1	
Banded Rail	1												1																											
Spotless Crake	2																		- 1			1																		
Marsh Crake Pukeko	1,145						119		1		123	165	392						150										52					1				139		
Coot	1,145						119		- 4		123	165	392						150										52									139		
Southern Skua																																								
Arctic Skua																																								
Pomarine Skua																																								
Long-tailed Skua																																								
Southern Black-backed Gull	9,023			89	301		190	37	6	41	150	457	226	122	266	180	32	305	664			33	49	67	107	155	845	179	548	671	206		73	2,285		366	69	304		
Red-billed Gull	10,946				12			166	40			1,294	217	342								2	113		24	9	24		639	69	51		3864	162		10		1262		
Black-billed Gull	1,890						246				,	65	110	2				110	6				1	4				289	15		43		16	867		66				
Little Tern																																								
Fairy Tern	23						19	4																																
Australian Gull-billed Tern	5																	1											3							1				
Caspian Tern	696			5	2		74	7	3	11	17	88	175	13	37	7	14	3	13			15	19	9	8	2	18	32	25	14	11	1	9	37	15	3	3	2	4	
White-winged Black Tern	4																																	3	1					
Black-fronted Tern	563																												27		92			433		11				
White-fronted Tern	1,494			3	3		151					111	115	60	46	10	- 3	19				500	8	176			180		5		25			27			36	12		
Whiskered Tern																																								

NON DEC 2024		garenga	ora H	unu - Karikari	garei Harbour	ka/Waipu	Kaipara	Kaipara	awhai		iland East Coast	mata/Tamaki/W	cau Harbour	of Thames	nandel	nga Harbour	2		rn Bay of Plenty	me/Wairoa	ern Hawkes Bav	Waikato	Harbour	a Harbour	in Harbour	ganui & Others	watra	Wairarapa	an Bay	n Bay	ell Spit	aven Inlet	ura/Mariboroug	rbury	Heathcote	Ellesmere	Coast		land	Chatman Islands
TOLS.		Paren	Houh	Rangs	Whan	Ruaka	North	South	Mang	Omah	Auckl	Waite	Manu	£	Coron	Taura	Maket	Ohiwa	Easte	Gisbo Hawk	South	Port	Aotea	Kawh	Ragla	Whan	Mana	Lake	Tasm	Golde	Farew	West	Kalko	Cante	Avon-	Lake	West	Otago	South	Chat
Site & Overall Total >>		NC	NC NC	NC NC	4,257	95	NC NC	3,385	862	72	162 1	,605 ″	9,110	3,356	,444	1,718	,654	434	526	0 1,258 NC	NC NC	NC NC	286	745		NC NC	0 °5,	,369	1,602	848 "	396	7"	3,750	2,605	35 "	916	264	3,789	151	NC NC
Mute Swan	18							2																										11		5				
Black Swan	14,893					2		1647	2		80	991	5,735	71	154	159	48			119			185	33	2		4,	,517	18		46		583				5	496		
Cape Barren Goose	6																											6												
Greylag Goose	43											1			-					- 4					2			14	1									21		
Canada Goose Paradise Shelduck	1,383							293 360		1	13	28	159 159	48 63	35	51	26 119		10	75			40 16	161	148			149 282	10 29	2	15 12		161 73				43	2 118		
Brown Teal	62							360	8		22	22	159	63	62	1/	119		10	1.0			16		14			262	29	- 2	12		/3				43	118		
Grey Teal	1,407							5					35	27	02	_	-			77									56		55		1150					2		
Mallard	2,433				50	28		144		2	8	46	730	442	56	83	72	17	8	201			5	1	9				174		17		230				26			
Grey Duck	4				30	20		2		-		70	/30	442	30	0.5	2	47		201			,	- 4	,				1/4		17		230				20	- 03		
Mallard/Grey Duck	90																- 2			90																				
Australasian Shoveler	1,254													7	4	70	10		1	70									82				1010							
Northern Shoveler	0													- 1	- 1	. 0	20		-	- "									36				2010							
New Zealand Scaup	588							21					26			5													533											
Great Crested Grebe	2																																			2				
Hoary-headed grebe	0																																							
Dabchick	9															3													1											
Australasian Grebe	0																																							
White-capped Albatross	0																																							
Australian Pelican	0																																							
Australasian Gannet	9							5		1				3																										
Fluttering Shearwater	0																																							
Little Shag	403				2	1		3		1		22	17	45	5	14		1	2	19								5	11									250		
Black Shag	313				1			3		5		1		55			14		7	14			1	1				193	1								4	10		
Pied Shag	1,131				8	9		3	22	10	1	61	161	609	17	14	26		21					6	60			11	69	4	4		11					3		
Little Black Shag	113				1							19	20	4	6	2	11		10	13								1	1					18		1	4	2		
Otago Shag	7																																					7		
Spotted Shag	30																													29								1		
White Heron	1																																	1						
Cattle Egret	0																																							
Intermediate Egret	0										-								-	-				-															- 21	
White-faced Heron	1,242				42	1		83	2	15	3	52	324	321	91	37	33	24	2	31				8	14			17	35	11	1		54				3	17	21	
Little Egret Reef Heron	1										1					1																								
Bittern	1										- 1																	1												
Glossy Ibis	1																											- 1						1						
Royal Spoonbill	1,730				38	3		38	18	11	10	12	117	205	43	39	91	44	6	35				79	81			16	65				6	99	29	483	2	60	100	
Banded Rail	1				50	-			10		10		***	1	-10										- 01				- 05						-	-103	-	- 00	100	
Marsh Crake	ô													-																										
Weka	0																																							
Pukeko	523							69				80	118	114				1										3	15									116		
Coot	0																																							
Southern Skua	0																																							
Arctic Skua	0																																							
Pomarine Skua	1							1																																
Long-tailed Skua	0																																							
Southern Black-backed Gull	4,134					40		167	167	8	7	74	215	200			101	108	103	384			15	163	169			119	141	358	224	1						723		
Red-billed Gull	15,800				4,084				474	14	7	181	209	179	914	3,606		75	223	54				52					333	321	16		133					1,848		
Black-billed Gull	2,658					9			13		5	2	689	292		3	17		24	41								22		40	6	3		1,211		224				
Little Tern	19							17																					1				1							
Fairy Tern	16							4	11	1																														
Gull-billed Tern	4								1					2																						1				
Caspian Tern	1,215				1	2		49	65	3	5	8	230	10	14	99	5	34	1				24	231	9			13	20	83		3	15	26	6	195	35	- 4	25	
White-winged Black Tern	0																																							
Black-fronted Tern	22																																4	18						
White-fronted Tern	3,222				3			414	70			5	166	656	7	287	4	130	106	- 2				10					6					1220		5	100	26	5	
Whiskered Tern	0																																							
Common Tern	2													2																										
Antarctic Tern	0																																							