BIRDS NEW ZEALAND

Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa

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BIRDS NEW ZEALAND
Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa

2026 WĀNAKA OTAGO
Birds New Zealand Conference

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We welcome advertising. Classified ads for members are at the editor's discretion. Articles/photos of birds in NZ or the South Pacific are welcome such as bird news, members' activities, birding sites, identifications, letters. Deadlines: 10th Feb, Aug & 1st May, Nov. Views expressed by contributors do not necessarily represent those of OSNZ (Inc) or the editor. When you're finished with this copy please pass it on to someone interested in NZ birds.

Bar-tailed Godwit 'AJD', Whanganui River, 1/11: *Paul Gibson.*

NO.48 DECEMBER 2025

COVER IMAGE
Kākā feeding on Kōwhai, Ōtari Wilton's Bush, Wellington.
Photo by Michael Szabo.

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From the President's Desk

October Council meeting and Strategic Planning session

In October, the Birds New Zealand Council gathered in Ōtautahi Christchurch for a weekend of meetings. This was the first opportunity to gather in person with new Council members Brenda Greene and Nic Rawlence. On Saturday, we had our regular quarterly meeting, with a full agenda covering our financial position, health and safety, regional activities, progress on various schemes and programmes, and research funding. Following on from this, we held a Finance Subcommittee meeting in early November. This helped to clarify the impacts of the changes we made to membership subscriptions in 2024, and ensure appropriate investment plans for research funds administered by Birds New Zealand.

One notable highlight reported at the meeting was the completion of the digital archiving of our scientific journal, *Notornis*. All 5,151 articles published in it since 1939 are now available online as single-article PDFs. I am grateful to *Notornis* Editor Colin Miskelly, along with Vice President Ian Armitage and Dallas Bishop for the hundreds of hours that have been spent ensuring this trove of ornithological research is correct and available free-to-access online.

On Sunday we were ably facilitated by Sarah Wilson in a Strategic Planning day to set the course for the future of the Society (see photo below). Looking to the past can help chart the course for the future, so we began the day by sharing stories from the history of the Society, from the very first Beach Patrols, Society publications and key figures, right through to the most recent achievements such as the latest New Zealand Bird Atlas. We considered the key values, and proposed some ambitious aspirations for the Society as we progress towards our centenary in 2040. We will be seeking input on the draft Strategic Plan from Society representatives in due course, and look forward to sharing the final document with members at the Society's 2026 Annual General Meeting which will be held in Wānaka over King's Birthday weekend from 30th May to 1st June, 2026.

Birds New Zealand Research Fund Sponsorship

We are currently seeking a new sponsor to support the Birds New Zealand Research Fund (BNZRF). The BNZRF allows us to support a wide range of local research projects that expand our knowledge of birds and their habitats, including many threatened species. I would like to invite prospective funders to contact me at president@birdsnz.org.nz to discuss this opportunity. This edition of *Birds New Zealand* includes seven reports on a wide range of bird research projects which received support from the 2024 BNZRF.

2025 Australasian Ornithological Conference

In November I spent a week in Perth, Australia, representing Birds New Zealand at the Australasian Ornithological Conference (AOC). I had the opportunity to present my own research and show support to other members presenting their research, including New Zealand plenary speaker Kristal Cain. This was also an excellent opportunity to connect with Australian researchers and members of our counterpart society, BirdLife Australia.

I'm delighted to announce that our proposal to host the next AOC in Auckland in February 2027 has been accepted! This will be the first time that Birds New Zealand has physically hosted an AOC in Aotearoa New Zealand since 2013, with disruptions due to Covid resulting in Auckland hosting a virtual AOC online in 2022. Please stay tuned in early 2026 for more details, including the calls for symposia and abstracts. To support our conference organising committees and members in attending, the 2027 AOC will replace our annual Birds New Zealand conference in 2027. We will hold our Society AGM separately, with details to be confirmed in due course.

2026 Membership Renewals

For many Birds New Zealand members, the new year represents not just a fresh start, but also the time for annual membership renewals. To ensure the smooth continuation of membership benefits into the new year, please consider renewing your annual membership ahead of the holiday period. Please also update your contact details, if necessary.

Thank you to all members for your support of Birds New Zealand through 2025, ensuring that we can continue delivering high-quality evidence-based information on the birds of the New Zealand region. Thank you also to all of our Society office holders, including Regional Representatives, Regional Recorders, Scheme Convenors, and committee members for all your efforts this year. Lastly, I hope you have a wonderful summer break and a great start to 2026. I'm eagerly anticipating a restful break with family and friends around Canterbury, scoping out the birdlife of the local riverbeds and shores.

NATALIE FORSDICK, PRESIDENT

Birds New Zealand Council's Strategic Planning day: *Natalie Forsdick.*

Seabird survey of Aleipata offshore Islands October 2022 and 2023

This research project funded by the 2023 Pacific Islands Bird Conservation and Research Fund gathered baseline information on seabirds breeding on the Aleipata Islands in Samoa, mainly to determine the presence of remnant populations of petrels and shearwaters there to enable management actions to be developed for their protection, enhancement and/or restoration of these islands. The final report by Karen Baird of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme is now available online: https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/2023-PIBCRF-Aleipata-Seabird-Survey-Final-Report-2505.pdf

2026 NZ Bird Conference & Birds New Zealand AGM

The 2026 NZ Bird Conference and Annual General Meeting will be held in Wānaka over King's Birthday weekend (30 May-1 June). All events and meals will be at the Lake Wānaka Center. Deadline for early-bird registration: **31 March 2026**. Abstracts to be submitted by **28 February 2026**. Registrations close **15 May 2026**. Check www.birdsnz.org.nz/nz-bird-conference-2026/ for details, or contact your regional representative.

29 May 2026 (Friday)

17:00 – 19:00 Registration at Lake Wānaka Center

30 May 2026 (Saturday) at Lake Wanaka Center

07:30 – 08:30 Registration. Tea/coffee available
08:30 – 08:45 Opening
08:45 – 17:00 Scientific Day One
18:00 – 21:00 Informal Dinner

31 May 2026 (Sunday) at Lake Wanaka Center

08:00 – 08:25 Registration. Tea/coffee available
08:30 – 15:00 Scientific Day Two
15:30 – 17:00 AGM and Awards
18:00 – 21:00 Conference Dinner

1 June 2026 (Monday) Field trip options:

Wānaka Wetland Tour; Blue Pools Forest Walk; Rob Roy Glacier Hike; Mou Waho Island Visit; Tiel Valley Discovery Flight; Mist Netting Workshop.

There will also be a photo competition during the conference.

Notice of Annual General Meeting

The 2025 Annual General Meeting (for the year ending December 2025) will be held on 31st May 2026 at the Lake Wānaka Center (89 Ardmore Street, Wānaka 9305). Johannes Chambon, Secretary, 74 Leckhampton Court, Dunedin 9011. Email: secretary@birdsnz.org.nz

Call for Nominations for Council

The three-year Council term of Keith Woodley will expire at the next AGM (in 2026) plus three other places will be open for election. Nominations are called for these positions. Note that the incumbents are eligible to stand again. Nominations will close with the Secretary on 28th February 2026. Nominations must be signed by two financial members of the Society and be consented to in writing by the person nominated who must also be a financial member of the Society. Would nominators please include a brief CV of the nominated person if that person is not already a member of Council. Nomination forms are available on the website (https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/about-us/manual/forms/). Please send to Johannes Chambon, Secretary, 20 Reynolds Street, Dunedin 9011, or email to: secretary@birdsnz.org.nz

Calls for Notices of Motion

Notices of any motion to be considered by the 2026 Annual General Meeting must reach the Secretary before 28th February 2026, be in writing and be signed by the mover and seconder who shall be financial members of the Society. Please send to J. Chambon, Secretary, 74 Leckhampton Court, Dunedin 9011 or email to: secretary@birdsnz.org.nz

2026 Membership Renewals

Your annual membership is renewable on the anniversary of your joining date. Renewal reminders are sent out at regular intervals starting six weeks before your renewal date, and will continue until six weeks after the due date, until your annual membership has been paid. You can renew your membership via the website, either by a direct credit payment or a credit card payment: https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/login/#myaccount

Birds New Zealand depends on your membership subscription, so please pay promptly. Please also notify the Membership Secretary if your email address has changed since your last renewal: membership@birdsnz.org.nz

Giving the Gift of Birds this Christmas

Are you looking for a Christmas gift to give? You can gift them a 2026 Birds New Zealand membership for just $1.75 a week to help foster a lifetime appreciation of birds (just 90 cents a week for students). Please send an email to membership@birdsnz.org.nz and we will send you the Gift Voucher, or visit our website for more details: https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/donate/gift-a-membership/

Making a difference with a donation

Birds New Zealand is working to ensure a better future for birds, but we need your help. We are a registered charity (CC 41020) so tax credits are available for donations made in NZ in the following two ways:

* Deposit a donation into our bank account: 02-0290-0164715-00
* Make a donation by online credit card payment: https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/donate/make-a-donation/#!form/Donation

Leaving a Gift in your Will

If you would like to discuss leaving a Gift to Birds New Zealand in your Will, whatever it may be, please contact our Executive Officer Ingrid Hutzler: eo@birdsnz.org.nz

Fledgling Fund grants

Birds New Zealand's annual Fledgling Fund provides grants to encourage student members to attend the NZ Bird Conference and AGM. Each grant covers the registration fee and formal dinner. Applicants must have been a student member for two or more years and enrolled full-time at a NZ tertiary institution or secondary school. Only one grant can be awarded per student member. Criteria and application form here: https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/awards-and-prizes/notornis-and-conference-awards/fledgling-grant/. Applications must be submitted to the Secretary (secretary@birdsnz.org.nz) by 28 February 2026.

New Members

We warmly welcome: Emma Brockes, Roger Hickling, Paul Shucksmith, Ruan Tian Wei, Kori Pan, Jasmine Bai, Sean Thomson, Suzan Phillips (Auckland); Katie Dowle (Bay of Plenty); Diana Proctor, Sheree Gibb, Charles Gillingham, Melissa Gunn, Isla O'Donoghue, Catherine Fitchett (Canterbury); Malcolm Smith (Gisborne/Wairoa); Andrew Fulford (Hawke's Bay); Jaime Andres Botet Rodriguez (Manawatu); Ian Price, Martin Tonks, Sue Leov (Nelson); Christina Pasetta (Northland); Wendy Botha, Felix Borrowdale, Phoebe Chapman, Tabitha Heaton, Ada Patterson (Otago); James Wickham (South Auckland); Catriona Gower (Southland); Catherine Doyle, Chris Shimmin, Lynda and John Matthews (Taranaki); Ronan O'Toole, Jennifer Glenn, Carly Terelmes, Emily Schriner (Waikato); Ronan Nava (Wellington); Martin Hofmann (Rest of World).

Donations

We thank Andy Owen, Nicola Glubb, Ian Price, Stephanie Maunsell, Angus Fordham, Cecily Horne, Rosemary van Essen, Catherine Doyle, Nick Terry, Suzan Phillips, Ian Armitage, Nataliya Rik.

David Medway Scholarship

Sponsored by the George Mason Charitable Trust and named in commemoration of David Medway, this scholarship provides financial support to a student studying full-time at post-graduate level on a topic relating to ornithology. A scholarship may be awarded annually with a maximum value of $5000. Applications open 1st February 2026 and close **28th March 2026**. The form is here: https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/funding/david-medway-scholarship/

Marj Davis Scholarship

Established in 2018 in commemoration of Marj Davis, a single scholarship may be awarded annually with a maximum value of $1500 to provide financial support to a full-time Masters or PhD student conducting research in ornithology. Eligible research projects must clearly be of benefit to NZ ornithology and NZ birds. Preference will be given to proposals expected to contribute to a greater knowledge of birds in the Canterbury/West Coast region. Applications open 1st February 2026 and close **28th March 2026**. The form is here: https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/funding/marj-davis-scholarship/

Project Assistance Fund 2026

Each year Birds New Zealand gives grants for bird research and dissemination of information about birds. The maximum amount is usually $2000. Individuals or groups who are current members may apply. Applications close **28 March 2026** and are considered at the June Council meeting. Guidelines and application form: www.birdsnz.org.nz/funding/paf/

Fledgling Fund recipient reports

Like many of the Society's more enthusiastic or wanderlustful members, I had the great pleasure of attending the 2025 NZ Bird Conference in Auckland. This was my fourth NZ Bird Conference but the first at which I presented. As a result, my experience this year was particularly nerve-racking but rewarding. I was incredibly touched by the overwhelmingly positive responses and interactions I had afterwards, and the kind words and encouragement. It was really rewarding to present on my research investigating seasonal mortality patterns in Chatham Island Tāiko to such an enthusiastic and knowledgeable group of people, and I appreciated the conversations and feedback. I thank Birds New Zealand for supporting my attendance, I had a fantastic time and look forward to attending many more in future. *Ela Hunt, MSc candidate, Department of Zoology, University of Otago*

Attending the 2025 conference in Auckland was an inspiring and rewarding experience. I was honoured to present a talk on my doctoral research examining flight initiation distance in Red-billed Gulls, focusing on how human disturbance influences risk perception across urban and rural habitats. Presenting my findings to field ecologists and behavioural biologists provided valuable feedback, particularly on connecting behavioural responses to conservation planning in urban environments. Engaging with researchers whose work overlaps with mine generated several ideas for potential collaborations and comparative analyses. I am grateful to Birds New Zealand for supporting my attendance. The conference also strengthened my understanding of the NZ ornithological research community. *Zunaira Noreen, PhD candidate, Department of Zoology, University of Otago*

Attending the 2025 conference was an honour and a privilege. The Fledgling Fund grant allowed me to present part of my ongoing thesis on avian provision of ecosystem services and disservices in New Zealand apple orchards, and to hear the insights from people with 30+ years of experience, which was inspiring. The mingling of young students with seasoned veterans is one of the greatest strengths of these events, as I believe it works both ways. *Giuliana Ferrari, PhD candidate, Massey University*

Call for submissions on the Conservation Status of NZ Birds

In early 2026, the Department of Conservation plans to convene a panel of bird experts to re-assess the conservation status of New Zealand birds. The last assessment was in 2021 (nztcs36entire.pdf). Detailed notes supporting each assessment is available at the NZ Threat Classification website (https://nztcs.org.nz). Species added to the official New Zealand checklist via the Records Appraisal Committee of Birds New Zealand will automatically be included in our new assessment. I welcome submissions for changes to the current threat classification of any NZ bird species or subspecies, either because you think we got it wrong in 2021, or new information has become available in the last 5 years (e.g. new population estimates, new population growth rate estimates, recent or proposed taxonomic changes). I also welcome information on annual survival estimates of adults, age at first breeding for use in calculating generation lengths, or which supports current threat classifications.

When making your submission, please don't just say "species X should be classified as Nationally Critical", but instead refer to the criteria in the NZ Threat Classification System manual (https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/science-and-technical/new-zealand-threat-classification-system-manual-2022-part-1-assessments.pdf) and preferably send a copy of any new data, published or unpublished, that will help the panel make its decisions. If requested, unpublished data and proposed taxonomic revisions will be treated in confidence by the panel. Please send your submission to Hugh Robertson, Terrestrial Fauna Science, Biodiversity, Heritage & Visitor Group, Department of Conservation, PO Box 10420, Wellington 6143, or email hrobertson@doc.govt.nz by 31 January 2026.

HUGH ROBERTSON

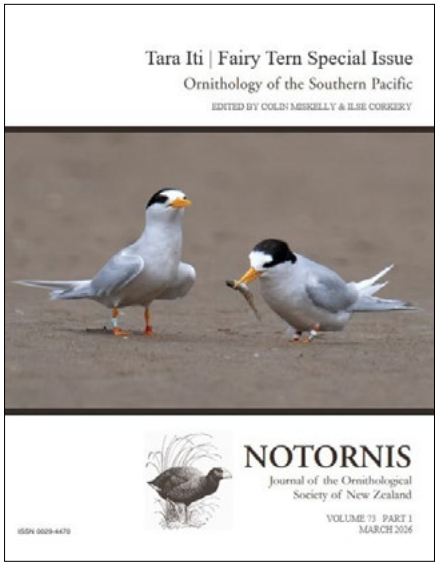
Banding Office celebrates major milestone

The Department of Conservation (DOC) launched the FALCON Bird Banding database in 2020 as an externally-accessible central repository for all bird mark-recapture data. FALCON keeps track of over 2 million bands, 1.7 million banded birds and over 1,700 banding operators. Two-thirds of the almost 500 registered projects are external to DOC, as are three-quarters of the 1,002 active users, highlighting the broad engagement in the system by certified banders. Non-banders are even more engaged – some 1,500 members of the public participate in citizen science through reporting resighting records of marked birds via https://app.birdbanding.doc.govt.nz/sightings; these reports have doubled over the past five years! As part of DOC's statutory role in managing wildlife marking, the Banding Office has expanded to support marking of bats, microchips, and VHF transmitters, and will soon be rebranding as the Wildlife Marking Office. FALCON is also evolving to support more species and marking methods, so we're excited to see even more growth and collaboration ahead!

MICHELLE BRADSHAW, DOC BANDING OFFICER

New smart binoculars launched

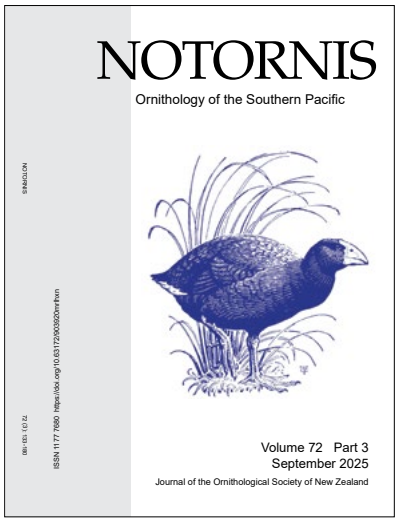
Swarovski Optik has launched a new pair of smart binoculars called AX Visio, describing them as the world's first AI-supported smart binoculars combining powerful long-range optics with advanced "digital intelligence". The new binoculars use AI to identify up to 9,000 bird species and can capture high-resolution photos and videos of sightings, which can be shared via the Swarovski Optik Outdoor App. A "share discoveries" function also allows users to tag the location of a sighting in the display field and then pass the binoculars to someone else to view the same sighting by following arrow markings in the display field. Birds New Zealand magazine plans to field test the new binoculars for review next year. For more details see: https://www.swarovskioptik.com/us/en/birding/products/binoculars/ax-visio



Notornis Fairy Tern special issue Order your copy now!

The March 2026 edition of *Notornis* will be a book-sized special issue focused entirely on the New Zealand Fairy Tern Tara Iti. The individual papers contained in it will be freely available to all on the Birds New Zealand publications archive. We are planning a limited print-run of the book, which will contain identical text, but with additional photographs between the 'chapters'. If you wish to receive a printed copy of the book, pre-payment of $35 must be received before **10 February 2026**. The cost includes courier delivery (to New Zealand addresses only). The size of the print run will be determined by the number of pre-paid copies – there will be no spare copies available for later purchase. Please email info@fairytern.org.nz with *Notornis* in the subject line to order a copy and to receive instructions for payment. (The cover above is a mock-up).

COLIN MISKELLY, *NOTORNIS* EDITOR



Latest *Notornis* online

The September 2025 edition of *Notornis* is now online, including new research on Birds of Aitutaki, Cook Islands; Breeding success of Little Penguins in Wellington, 2014–2023; Factors affecting shorebird hatching outcomes at the Ashley River/Rakahuri-Saltwater Creek estuary; Banded Rail detection at Ruakaka estuary before, during, and after mangrove removal; and Dawn counts of Spotted Shags at Tata Beach, Golden Bay, 2009–2018. Link: https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/society-publications/current-quarterly-publications/

Common Tern (top left), Black-fronted Tern (below), White-fronted Tern (at right): *Michael Szabo.*

A Bird's Eye View - Finding unusual terns

New Zealand is lucky to have a wide diversity of terns as these elegant seabirds offer some interesting identification challenges. The colonial nesting habits of the most abundant species–and their mobile post-breeding and migratory flocks–offer the chance to search for unusual terns among them.

Know your tern species

The New Zealand checklist records 21 species: the endemic White-fronted and Black-fronted, plus the native Fairy, Caspian, Antarctic and White-winged Black. Five tern and noddy species breed at the Kermadec Islands (Brown, Black and Grey noddies; Sooty and White terns) and Gull-billed Tern recently bred in NZ for the first time. The most recent vagrant tern species recorded here are Black, White-naped and Bridled, which–along with Common, Little, Crested, Arctic, Whiskered and Grey-backed–complete the list. Two more that breed in Australia may yet turn up (Lesser Crested, Roseate) and to complicate matters Gull-billed Tern is now recognised as two species by the International Ornithological Congress (Common Gull-billed Tern and the larger Australian Tern).

Subtle differences

As with waders, differences between tern species are often subtle, so getting to know the various plumages of the most abundant species is vital (see the New Zealand Birds Online website). White-fronted and Black-fronted terns have different breeding and non-breeding adult (and juvenile) plumages. Pay attention to overall size, leg and bill colour/size, extent of cap, colour of primary feathers and wing markings.

I found an adult Common Tern in non-breeding plumage next to a juvenile Black-fronted Tern and an adult White-fronted Tern in non-breeding plumage in a flock of White-fronted Terns on Wellington's south coast in March 2022 (photo above). It was slightly smaller than the White-fronted Tern, with a dark (carpal) bar on its wing and darker primary feathers, but was slightly larger than the orange-legged, dark-billed Black-fronted Tern.

Watch suitable locations and get to know local sites

Unusual vagrant terns often join tern colonies or flocks for safety, standing at or near the edge. Familiarise yourself with where and when terns breed or flock in your area – ie, coastal rocks, sandspits, mudflats, beaches or shell banks. Visit likely sites regularly during the right time of year to build your local knowledge and increase your chances of finding unusual terns. Note weather conditions and tides as they can influence where and when terns gather.

In summer and autumn, I try to check Te Raekaihau Point (Wellington), Plimmerton fire station and Waikanae Sandspit around high tide. I've seen Common, Black-fronted, Sooty and Black among the regular White-fronted flocks on rocks behind Plimmerton fire station and other nearby rocks. At Waikanae Sandspit, I've seen Common, Little, Black, Black-fronted and White-winged Black, and in April 2022 I found an Arctic Tern there. Patience and persistence help greatly as unusual terns may fly in to join a tern flock but then stay only for a brief time–so you need to be alert for when that happens!

MICHAEL SZABO, EDITOR

Koekoeā with GPS tracker.

Neil Fitzgerald and Terry Greene at work.

Kiwi-nui North Island Brown Kiwi chick: *National Kiwi Hatchery.*

Koekoeā quest – uncovering secrets of the Long-tailed Cuckoo

The endemic Koekoeā Long-tailed Cuckoo only breeds in Aotearoa New Zealand and is a declining threatened species. Like Pīpīwharauroa Shining Cuckoo, the annual arrival of Koekoeā here in spring, and departure for tropical destinations in autumn, has long captured imaginations, yet there are huge gaps in our knowledge of this taonga species. Their epic migration and brood parasitism approach to parenting makes it challenging to get a clear understanding of their vulnerabilities.

These fascinating traits also challenge common conservation management actions. Decline of their hosts – especially Pōpokotea Whitehead in the North Island and Mohua Yellowhead in the South Island – has been followed by decline and local extinction of Koekoeā populations, but when new populations of these hosts have been established (e.g., through translocation to ecosanctuaries or intensive pest control in mainland forests), Koekoeā have not returned. Understanding why, and how to change this is crucial for their conservation. On top of that, the huge non-breeding range of Koekoeā exposes them to a range of threats far from our shores, such as habitat loss and extreme weather events. If birds from different parts of Aotearoa go to different areas of the Pacific, their loss from part of their range could have cascading effects thousands of kilometres away.

With support from the 2024 Birds New Zealand Research Fund, Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research (now an internal group within the new Bioeconomy Science Institute) and the Department of Conservation (DOC) are working to better understand Koekoeā Long-tailed Cuckoo movements in Aotearoa, migratory connectivity between populations, and to assess the current population size and whether remaining Koekoeā populations are genetically isolated as important first steps toward improving conservation of this threatened endemic species. During the 2024/25 summer breeding season, Neil Fitzgerald (BSI) and Terry Greene (DOC) attached GPS tracking tags to 13 Koekoeā. Five of these birds have so far been tracked migrating to Bougainville, Marshall Islands, Fiji and Tonga, revealing non-stop flights of 2–4 days. They hope to receive data from other tags when the birds return to New Zealand and plan to capture and tag more Koekoeā in 2025/26. For genomic analysis, they are also collecting DNA samples from the captured birds, and from birds found injured or freshly dead (for example from collision with windows), and are asking for public help with this.

To report injured Koekoeā, please call 0800 DOC HOT (0800 362 468) or contact your nearest DOC office or native bird rescue. Then, please let Neil Fitzgerald know so he can liaise with them: [fitzgeraldn@landcareresearch.co.nz]. For freshly-dead Koekoeā, please put the bird in a plastic bag, freeze it and contact Neil Fitzgerald via email as soon as possible.

NEIL FITZGERALD (BIOECONOMY SCIENCE INSTITUTE) & TERRY GREENE (DOC)

eDNA identification of the wild diet of kiwi chicks

We know that kiwi eat worms, grubs, invertebrates, leaves and berries, but what types and how much of each is eaten by hatchling aged kiwi? Do they eat whichever invertebrates they first encounter? Do they eat more worms than grubs? Do they select certain berry species, and then specifically search out those from within their surroundings? Across 2024-2025 we have been generously supported by the Birds New Zealand Research Fund to investigate the wild diet of very young kiwi. We have been working with dedicated collaborators from the Department of Conservation, local iwi, the Whakatane Kiwi Trust, Wild Solutions, and Manaaki Whenua–Landcare Research to find and collect faecal samples from young kiwi chicks, and use environmental DNA techniques to identify which fauna and flora species the samples contain.

While kiwi have been successfully raised in captivity from egg to juvenile as part of Operation Nest Egg (ONE) for two decades on beef-mince, cat-biscuit and vegetable-based diets, the specific nutritional needs and dietary preferences of kiwi chicks have not been investigated. Our research will help improve the captive diets fed to young kiwi raised in ONE, and ensure that they have the best diet at the start of their lives in the wild.

We are still in the midst of our exciting research program. We have iwi consultations underway, new hapu-led kiwi-diet discovery collaborations have been inspired and initiated, and we have roughly half the samples collected. Our plan is to try to identify the wild diets of both Rowi Okarito Brown Kiwi and Kiwi-nui North Island Brown Kiwi, two kiwi species whose chicks are frequently raised in ONE. But after a couple of seasons of back-to-back breeding, 2024/2025 was a very quiet breeding year! Happily, our hardy specimen collectors are willing to continue collecting this coming season to ensure adequate sampling, and lab work could commence in autumn.

In addition to the kind assistance that we have received from technical collaborators and iwi experts, we have been supported in engaging the Birds New Zealand community by Ngāi Tahu Tourism's National Kiwi Hatchery Aotearoa. In January, the National Kiwi Hatchery, the largest and longest running ONE facility, allowed us to host an exclusive behind the scenes tour of their incubation and creche facility for Birds New Zealand members. After their tour, members were hosted by keepers Jessica Flamy and Nell Masters in the kiwi creche and viewed two juvenile Kiwi-nui receiving their pre-release health checks. Kiwi Keeper Sarah Uhl also made a delicious morning tea for the group, which we enjoyed together while discussing the project and kiwi conservation. We are very grateful to the generous support from Birds New Zealand and all others involved, and we look forward to updating members on our findings in 2026.

LINDSEY GRAY & MEGAN JOLLY

Banding Pakahā chicks from the Kokomohua artificial burrows.

Pakahā monitoring on Long Island

Since 1991, the Pakahā Fluttering Shearwater colony nestled on the north-eastern slopes of Kokomohua Long Island in Tōtaranui Queen Charlotte Sounds has been the source for multiple translocations. Driven by the need to develop translocation techniques for the use in conservation management of endangered seabirds in Aotearoa New Zealand several translocations of Pakahā have been undertaken from Kokomohua to nearby islands in Te Tauihu-o-te-Waka Marlborough Sounds (Te Pākeka Maud Island), as well as further afield to Te Whanganui a Tara Wellington, and most recently to Mohua Golden Bay. Despite these translocations, little is known about how the source population has been faring on Kokomohua. In an effort to understand the long-term picture of the population and to improve future translocation endeavours a collaboration between Birds New Zealand, Wildlife Management International Ltd. (WMIL) and the Department of Conservation (DOC) seek to monitor a network of artificial burrows at the Pakahā colony.

Thanks to funding from the Birds New Zealand Research Fund, trips to Kokomohua with local Marlborough Birds New Zealand members occurred from 2021 to 2025. Trips have coincided with Pakahā egg laying and chick rearing periods to assess breeding occupancy and breeding success. Breeding occupancy was calculated as 64% for the 114 artificial burrows during the November 2024 trip. Pakahā parents were mostly on eggs, with a few parents guarding chicks and some chicks were detected alone. This occupancy rate is 0.2% less than last season, and 17.8% higher than in 2022 when the colony was severely impacted by landslides. It is also the second highest occupancy recorded in this colony to date. Within the artificial burrows a breeding success estimate of 80.3% was calculated for the artificial nestbox colony after a trip in January 2025, with 53 breeding pairs successfully producing a chick within the artificial nestbox colony (8 chicks were already presumed fledged). The trip was also successful in getting 64 chicks banded (45 from artificial nestboxes, 19 from natural burrows).

Seventeen previously marked adults were re-sighted at the colony, and an additional 32 adults were banded this season. No Pakahā that had been previously translocated away from the colony have been re-sighted back at the Kokomohua colony thus far, however further focused monitoring at night is needed to better understand this. One of the banded chicks was recovered dead as a beach-wrecked bird in Victoria, Australia, 56 days after fledging.

Further monitoring will help us continue to increase this valuable dataset to better understand occupancy, yearly survivorship (using mark-recapture tools), and much more. This is important to better inform conservation management decisions for this seabird, considering potential threats such as climate change. We wish to thank Marlborough members who volunteered for these trips, the 2024 Birds New Zealand Research Fund for financial support, and the DOC Waitohi Picton office and Te Atiawa for their support.

ELIZABETH 'BIZ' BELL,
WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT INTERNATIONAL LTD

Tarāpuka on nest with chick, Motueka Spit: Rebecca Bowater/NZ Birds Online.

Tarāpuka repeat nationwide census

Tarāpuka Black-billed Gulls are endemic to Aotearoa New Zealand, with most breeding on braided rivers in the South Island and a potentially expanding population in the North Island. Claudia Mischler reported on the results of counts conducted between 2014/15 to 2016/17, with the final year being the most comprehensive national count, and highlighted the difficulty in assessing population trends due to inaccurate historical data. The total number of breeding birds counted during the national census was higher than expected, but a key suggestion from the published paper was to repeat the survey in approximately 5-10 years for the purpose of establishing trends.

During the 2024/25 season, the census was repeated using the same methods as in 2016/17 and repeated in 2023/24. This involved ground searches for colonies at the early stages of the breeding season to determine the stage of breeding within each region to establish the timing of flights, ideally during late incubation or hatching to capture the highest number of breeding pairs. A fixed-wing aircraft with a camera mounted underneath was used to fly over all rivers in the South Island with suitable habitat. Continuous severe flooding in Southland and Canterbury delayed breeding, and numerous pre-flight checks were required. High-resolution photographs were taken from the plane, flight tracks were logged, and precise colony locations were taken with a GPS. Unfortunately, no West Coast flights were completed this year due to shortages and injuries among the volunteers. The North Island was surveyed on the ground by Department of Conservation staff or local Birds New Zealand members.

Ground counts were done for as many colonies as possible in the South Island, provided that they were of medium size, in order to reduce disturbance. The ground counts will be compared to the nest counts from aerial photographs, and a correction factor will be calculated to adjust the aerial photograph counts. All aerial photograph nest counts will be conducted by the same two observers who counted images in 2023/24, and the mean count for each colony only counted with aerial photographs will be used for the total count after being adjusted with the correction factor. Initial counts by one observer for the South Island are indicative of a relatively stable population; however, final numbers are not yet completed. Not all North Island colony and nest numbers have been collated yet, either. Considering the challenges caused by the weather this year, resulting in continuous flooding of rivers and hence colonies, it was incredibly insightful to be able to repeat two consecutive counts to account for annual variability and movements of birds and colonies between rivers. The Birds New Zealand Research Fund, Environment Canterbury, Department of Conservation and Environment Southland all provided funding for both years of the latest census.

CLAUDIA MISCHLER, MIKE BELL, TROY MAKAN, TONY HABRAKEN, HEATHER DAVIES & RICHARD SCHOFIELD

Matuku-hūrepo catching an eel: *Imogen Warren/NZ Birds Online.*

'Dark-eyed' Australasian Gannet with readable red band, Farewell Spit: *David Melville.*

Habitat loss, nutritional stress and the decline of the Australasian Bittern in NZ

The Australasian Bittern Matuku-hūrepo is a native species which has recently experienced population declines, thought to be a result of their wetland habitats being degraded. Since the arrival of humans, over 90% of wetlands have been lost and it has been suggested that a loss of prey species could be leading to nutritional stress in the remaining bittern populations. However, there has been no recent research on their diets and whether a lack of prey may be a contributing factor to their population decline. For my PhD research, I used a combination of analyses to assess levels of nutritional stress in bitterns, including ptilochronology, stable isotope analysis, and compound specific isotope analysis (CSIA) on feather samples. To assess whether bitterns are experiencing variability in their diets geographically (between NZ regions) and over time, I analysed feather samples from live birds, nests, and museum study skins (from Auckland, Canterbury & Te Papa museums) ranging in dates from 1888 to 2024.

Ptilochronology is the measurement of the growth bars along the length of a feather. A single growth bar is grown every 24 hours, and its size is directly related to the nutritional condition of a bird. If a bird is experiencing adequate nutrition, it should have relatively uniform and regular growth bars but if it is under nutritional stress, it will have a mix of larger and smaller growth bars, corresponding to variation on days where there was and was not enough energy to expend on growth and development, respectively. The measurement of the average width and variance of growth bars along the length of a feather can thus indicate whether a bird is consuming a consistent diet or experiencing periods of nutritional stress. Upon measuring the growth bars of bittern feathers, I found contemporary populations of bitterns showed a significant increase in growth bar variability compared to their historical counterparts measured from museum collections. This indicates that contemporary birds are experiencing greater variability in their diets, which is consistent with loss of their wetland environments and changes in their prey availability. Although ptilochronology can provide a useful method to identify whether a bird has experienced variability in their diet, it cannot identify the cause of the variability. This is where stable isotope analysis and CSIA are valuable tools in providing a more direct measure of whether the birds have experienced changes in their diet and therefore trophic position.

Stable isotope analysis of delta15N and delta13C was performed on breast feathers collected from bitterns in the Auckland/Northland, Bay of Plenty, Waikato, Canterbury/Marlborough and West Coast regions. It was discovered that bitterns in most regions experienced an increase in delta15N over time, suggesting contemporary birds may be consuming higher trophic level prey. As levels of delta15N could also increase due to other causes (e.g. increased levels of agricultural run-off), I then used CSIA and identified most differences in delta15N were not the result of an increased trophic position.

Instead, contemporary populations in Bay of Plenty were sitting at an entire lower trophic position than their historical counterparts. This suggests that bitterns within the Bay of Plenty area were experiencing issues with either availability or accessibility of prey, and as a result were relying on lower trophic prey as a food source. Contemporary populations from Auckland/Northland and Waikato regions also had a lower trophic position than their historical counterparts, whereas contemporary birds from the Canterbury region had a slightly higher trophic position than their historical counterparts.

My analyses indicate that contemporary bittern populations are, in general, sitting at a lower tropic position than historical populations, which is likely due to a loss of their prey base. This finding coincides with the population declines and loss of wetland habitats over the past ~100 years. In conclusion, it appears that nutritional stress is likely a contributing factor to bittern decline and the species seems to be struggling to access its traditional prey species. If conservation efforts are to be successful, my study indicates that improvements to availability of prey will be vital to improving the species' future prospects.

My studies are conducted in collaboration with the Department of Conservation, Earth Sciences New Zealand (previously known as NIWA), and the University of Canterbury. I thank Birds New Zealand, the Brian Mason Scientific Trust, and the David Medway Scholarship for their generous support while I conducted this research.

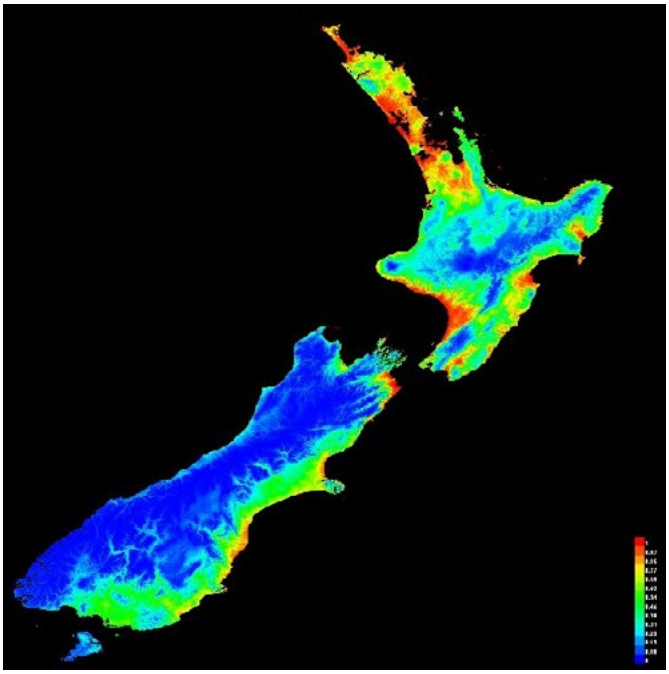
VANESSA KENNARD

Monitoring for HPAI in Gannets at Farewell Spit

Northern Gannets (*M. bassanus*) have been severely impacted by high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) with tens of thousands of birds having died since 2022 in the northern hemisphere. Serological investigation detected H5 antibodies in apparently healthy birds, indicating some birds had recovered from HPAI infection. Most of these had black (rather than pale blue) irises. In July 2024 an Australasian Gannet (*M. serrator*) was photographed off Albany, Western Australia which had dark irises, but there have been no reports of mortality events at any gannet colonies in either Australia or New Zealand, and HPAI has not been recorded in any wild birds in either country. This presented a conundrum: is HPAI present but undetected or is something other than HPAI responsible for dark eyes?

We are monitoring gannets at the Farewell Spit colony, having recorded several 'dark-eyed' birds during the 2024-25 breeding season. With support from the 2025 Project Assistance Fund we are catching, swabbing and banding birds with metal NZNBBS bands and readable engraved laminate plastic bands. So far, no HPAI has been detected from swab samples. A population of marked birds is now available for study which can assist in assessing impacts should an outbreak of HPAI occur in future, as well as facilitating repeat sampling of individual birds to determine whether the virome changes over time.

ROB SCHUCKARD, STEVE WOOD & DAVID MELVILLE



Genetic sequencing and habitat modelling of the Australasian bittern

The 2024 Birds New Zealand Research Fund has supported this new research which aims to improve understanding of the genetic detectability and ecological requirements of the critically endangered Australasian Bittern. Genetic sequencing of the Australasian Bittern was successfully achieved using DNA sequencing following DNA extraction, PCR amplification, and purification of tissue samples. The resulting sequences showed a 100% match with the only other published Australasian Bittern reference. In addition, habitat suitability modelling of the Australasian Bittern using MaxEnt showed good performance across both historical (1901-2000 – see map) and current (2001-2020) periods, achieving high predictive accuracy with reliable omission patterns. Temperature-related predictors, particularly mean annual temperature and mean temperature of the driest quarter, were the most influential, followed by moderate contributions from precipitation seasonality and annual rainfall, while distance to rivers contributed least. Historically, extensive-high suitability zones were observed across the Northland, Waikato-Hauraki, and Bay of Plenty wetlands, with smaller clusters in Gisborne, Hawke's Bay and Marlborough.

In contrast, current predictions indicate a contraction and fragmentation of suitable habitats, particularly within central and southern regions, reflecting a significant decline in optimal wetland for the species. Together, these outcomes demonstrate significant progress toward understanding both the genetic detectability and ecological requirements of the Australasian Bittern. The integration of molecular (eDNA) and spatial modelling approaches provides a robust framework for identifying remaining strongholds and guiding future wetland restoration. Ongoing sequencing and future predictive modelling will further refine these insights, supporting targeted conservation management for this nationally critical species. Grant recipient Prabu Raju thanks the 2024 Birds New Zealand Research Fund for its support. Full report: https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/2024-BNZRF-Bittern-Monitoring-Summary-Article-2510.pdf

PRABU RAJU, PROF. MIKE TAYLOR & PROF. DIANNE BRUNTON,
SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES,
UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND

Artist's impression of *Aeviperditus gracilis: S*asha Votyakova/ Te Papa, CC BY 4.0

Kārearea NZ Falcon collecting a rangle stone: *Dallas Bishop.*

A possible early bowerbird from ancient New Zealand

A new study has described an extinct songbird species from the ancient fossil locality of St Bathans in central Otago, with similarities to bowerbirds, which they name *Aeviperditus gracilis*. The co-authors say the fossil bone they have analysed dates from the early-middle Miocene (19–14 million years ago). The new fossil may drastically alter the prehistoric geographic distribution of the bowerbirds, which are presently known from Australia and New Guinea. Bowerbirds are a songbird family renowned for their unique courtship behaviour, in which the male builds a structure and decorates it with sticks and brightly coloured objects as a site where it displays in order to attract a mate.

Aotearoa New Zealand is home to several endemic songbird lineages that are likely to have dispersed from ancient Australia between the Eocene (56–33.9 million years ago) and Miocene (19–6 million years ago). Although the Australian pre-Pleistocene passerine fossil record is well-described, comparatively little is known about Miocene songbirds in New Zealand. The new study shows the leg bone of *A. gracilis* is most comparable to the 'avenue builder' subclade of crown bowerbirds, which includes Regent Bowerbird. They estimate its body mass as 32.9g, which sits in the same range as the Hihi Stitchbird (30-36g). They describe its relatively smaller size and elongate proportions as unlike those of any known existing or fossil bowerbird, and conclude that "*Aeviperditus gracilis* may represent a stem ptilonorhynchid [bowerbird]". They go on to suggest the extinction of songbird species such as *A. gracilis* in New Zealand was probably associated with the cooling of the climate. The co-authors are Elizabeth Steell, Daniel Field, Pascale Lubbe, Alex Brown, Nic Rawlence and Alan Tennyson of Cambridge University, University of Otago (Palaeogenetics Laboratory) and Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. *A possible early bowerbird from the Miocene of New Zealand was published in Historical Biology* in October: https://doi.org/10.1080/08912963.2025.2568099

Kārearea collecting rangle stones

On 14 August 2025, a group of four were walking on the seaward side of Lake Kohangatera, one of the two Parangarahu Lakes east of Pencarrow Head near Wellington to survey Pohowera Banded Dotterels. As we crossed onto the beach a Kārearea New Zealand Falcon flew low over our heads out to the shoreline to land out of view. We moved to the shoreline where we observed an immature female Kārearea on a low tree stump. No prey item was detected, and the bird was more interested in something on the beach. During a 14 minute period we observed the bird fossicking on the ground. Her actions included movement to and from tree debris perches, eyeing the ground from her perch, and pecking at material on the ground. On the beach where we stood, apart from stones, carpophyllum, a type of brown algae was present (https://inaturalist.nz/observations/306145891 uploaded by CH). This material was not observed where the Kārearea had been. A total of 62 photos were taken by two of us (DB, GdL). One photo clearly showed a small smooth stone in the bird's bill. The stone is calculated as having a length of about 17mm based on a measurement taken from the photograph and bill measurements from specimens in the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa.

The term 'rangle' is used to describe stones that may aid Kārearea digestion by stirring up grease and mucus (Colin Miskelly, *pers. comm.*, 14/08/25). Noel Hyde (Wingspan) confirmed occasional reports, including his own, of Kārearea collecting rangle stones. On 26 April 2021 by Te Raekaihau Point, Wellington an *eBird* checklist with photos submitted by Michael Szabo, Imogen Warren and Harry Boorman recorded a juvenile Kārearea picking up and swallowing small stones (https://ebird.org/atlasnz/checklist/S86383814). Stone size published by Hyde & Worthy (https://doi.org/10.63172//763047eijmmw) indicates the female Kārearea takes a larger stone with dimension given of 22.5mm x 15mm and 20.2mm x 12.5mm. The stone measurement for the Lake Kohangatera female Kārearea is comparable. Our thanks to Noel Hyde and Colin Miskelly (Te Papa).

GEOFF DE LISLE, DALLAS BISHOP, CHRIS HYNES & GRAEME LYON

Artistic reconstruction of a female Rēkohu Shelduck by Sasha Votyakova © Te Papa CC BY 4.0

Rēkohu Shelduck described

A new study has described a new extinct shelduck species from fossil bone deposits on the Chatham Islands, which date from thousands of years ago. Anatomical and genomic analyses confirm that the Rēkohu Shelduck was the sister-taxon to the Pūtangitangi Paradise Shelduck of mainland New Zealand. The ancestors of the Rēkohu Shelduck colonised the Chatham Islands around 390,000 years ago. Co-lead author Associate Professor Nic Rawlence, Director of the Otago Palaeogenetics Laboratory at University of Otago says, "In that time the Rēkohu Shelduck evolved shorter, more robust wings and longer leg bones indicating it was going down the pathway towards flightlessness". Link to the full paper, published in July: https://academic.oup.com/zoolinnean/article/204/3/zlaf069/8212055?login=false

A lifeline for Pukunui

Pukunui pair mating: *Glenda Rees.*

The Department of Conservation (DOC) expects the critically endangered Pukunui Southern New Zealand Dotterel to have a better chance at breeding this year following an aerial predator control operation in September. DOC and Zero Invasive Predators (ZIP) successfully applied biodegradable 1080 cereal bait across about 40,000 hectares of Rakiura National Park to help protect the Pukunui. DOC Southern South Island Operations Director Aaron Fleming says the aim was to heavily reduce feral cat, rat and possum numbers there. "With just 105 birds remaining, Pukunui are literally on the brink of extinction. The population has declined from 176 since 2020, largely due to predation by feral cats. In the 2023 season alone at least 41 adult birds died. Over the years, our team have worked extremely hard trapping, hunting and using bait stations to control predators but with Pukunui numbers continuing to decline, it was clear we needed to take a different approach – before it was too late."

Pukunui were once widespread across the South Island but Rakiura is now their last refuge. To secure their long-term future, DOC says introduced predators need to be controlled over a larger area there. "The safest and most effective way to control predators over large, remote areas is to use bait pellets containing 1080, which are distributed from helicopters along predetermined and monitored flight paths. The bait targets rodents and possums, with feral cats controlled as they feed on the poisoned carcasses," says Aaron Fleming. Bait was applied over about 40,000 hectares of Rakiura National Park, covering the large home range of feral cats. ZIP also delivered a small-scale eradication trial across 6,500 hectares, testing tools and techniques for the Predator Free Rakiura project. This was the first time 1080 cereal bait had been applied aerially on the island to protect Pukunui. The next Pukunui flock count will be in autumn 2026.

Evaluating the effectiveness of call surveys for Spotless Crake

Very little is known about the ecology of Pūweto Spotless Crake, particularly its preferred habitat and reliable methods for detecting it. This project, supported by the 2024 Birds New Zealand Research Fund, investigated habitat associations and tested the effectiveness of call playback surveys in the Manawatū-Whanganui region. Fieldwork was completed from September 2024 to March 2025 across a range of wetlands. Targeted acoustic surveys were conducted alongside detailed vegetation mapping and analysis. Playback surveys were used to examine factors influencing detection probability and calling rates, and data were analysed using generalised linear mixed models to assess the effects of environmental and survey variables.

The findings indicate that Pūweto are more likely to occur in wetlands with dense fringing vegetation dominated by tall emergent plants such as raupō and flax, although some habitat flexibility was observed. Detection probability was affected by environmental conditions and time of day, emphasising the need for standardised survey protocols to improve monitoring reliability. Overall, this research has provided valuable insight into the ecology and monitoring of Pūweto and the results will help refine best-practice survey methods, wetland management, and support conservation of other cryptic, wetland-dependent species in Aotearoa.

CHARLOTTE ROSE ANDREW, MSc CANDIDATE, MASSEY UNIVERSITY

Chatham Island Taiko and Chatham Petrel diets

Chatham Island Taiko chick: *Graeme Taylor/NZ Birds Online.*

Seabirds worldwide are declining. In 2010, the landmark study *Population trend of the world's monitored seabirds, 1950-2010* by M. Paleczny and others revealed that global seabird populations had decreased by 70% over the preceding 60 years. Many conservation efforts focus on intensive monitoring at the nest. Meanwhile, out of sight and further at sea, their diet is threatened by both warming seas and competition with fisheries. To understand the extent of these threats, monitoring the diets of seabirds is essential. Yet, it is unexpectedly difficult and can require the labour-intensive use of cameras or the specialised morphological analyses of complex parts found in regurgitations. Advances in environmental DNA technologies enable us to obtain a picture of a bird's diet from faeces or regurgitated samples alone.

The critically endangered Tchaik (Chatham Island Taiko) and the vulnerable Ranguru (Chatham Petrel) are among the rarest seabird species in the world, with only about 100 and 1,100 individuals respectively. They have been the focus of intense conservation efforts for several decades, but their diets remain incredibly elusive. Painting a clearer picture of their eating habits is critical to achieve better conservation outcomes. Amazingly, Myctophiformes, a group that includes deep-water lanternfish, were a prevalent prey type for the Chatham Petrel, and the most common prey for the Chatham Island Taiko. This observation explains GPS data from Johannes Chambon which identified night-time activity. A comprehensive report of this work will be presented in Erin Marshall's upcoming MSc thesis, which will also include a timeline of the Chatham Petrel diet using isotope data obtained from museum samples, some of which are nearly a century old. Grant recipient Ludovic Dutoit thanks the 2024 Birds New Zealand Research Fund for supporting this research.

ERIN MARSHALL, JOHANNES CHAMBON & LUDOVIC DUTOIT, UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO

Tenick Dennison obituary

Tenick Dennison died on 17 September 2025 at the age of 98. During the 1980s and 90s he and a handful of notable ornithologists grew the OSNZ Wellington region's membership to about 40, including a healthy number of junior ornithologists. This was an active period of bird surveys, meetings, field camps and a bird training course for members with guest speakers and workshops. His OSNZ contribution was a factor in receiving the NZ Order of Merit for services to conservation in the Wairarapa. He took part in the first two Chatham Taiko expeditions to the Chatham Islands, co-authored papers for *Notornis* on a diverse range of subjects and travelled widely in pursuit of his interest in birds. Tenick was a practical, no-nonsense individual who rolled up his sleeves and got on with whatever project caught his imagination. On the second Taiko expedition he broke his leg on the second day. As a GP, he correctly diagnosed his condition, bound the leg up and carried on!

Tenick had a particular interest in Black-fronted Dotterels and spent many hours surveying and counting the population in the Wairarapa. That led to the establishment of Henley Lake, an area of abandoned gravel pits on the outskirts of Masterton frequented by Black-fronted Dotterels, a project in which Tenick took a significant lead. Many in the birding world will remember Tenick whose parting advice to family was always "work hard." And he did.

PAUL SHORTIS

View from Parangiju Mountain Lodge (*Colin Miskelly*) with Blyth's Hornbill photo inset (*Oscar Thomas*).

Solomon Islands sampler – frogmouths and fruit-doves

Article by Colin Miskelly

It is a surreal experience to watch enormous hornbills flying over a Pacific rainforest. Their astonishing loud wingbeats add to the spectacle – louder than the wing noise of any species that I have heard previously.

Blyth's Hornbills were on my wish-list before departing for the Solomon Islands, and it took only a few hours to encounter them, in the hills above Honiara. Two nights at Parangiju Mountain Lodge provided a great introduction to the wide diversity of forest-dwelling birds on the island of Guadalcanal, and the opportunity to start matching unfamiliar calls (and other sounds!) to new species.

The Solomon Islands are an archipelago of close to 1,000 islands, with each of the half dozen main islands having their own range of endemic species. Australian journalist Greg Roberts and I were accompanied there by Brenden Mautoa and James Talotuita of Tourism Solomons. We split our time between the islands of Guadalcanal and Santa Isabel, but anyone intent on seeing the full range of 100+ Solomon Islands endemics would need to allow much longer and travel more widely than our 12-day visit.

Spectacular species seen from the verandah at Parangiju included Solomons Sea Eagle, Blyth's Hornbill, Oriental Hobby, and the tiny Sahul Sunbird and Midget Flowerpecker.

A walk to nearby Tenaru Falls producing a confusion of fruit-doves, parrots and cuckoo-shrikes, along with Rufous Fantails. It was fascinating to watch the hobby (a starling-sized falcon) stooping at large tropical butterflies – perhaps in play, as it released them each time.

Lungga River

A 4WD trip into the forested interior of Guadalcanal was a highlight of our stay at Parangiju, although the logging road that we drove along was a reminder of one of the main factors impacting Solomon Islands birds. One of the challenges of looking for birds in a tropical jungle is that many species stay high in the canopy, hidden by dense foliage. The road followed the contour of a steep slope along the Lungga River, providing regular view points over the canopy. This allowed us to see a variety of pigeons, parrots and starlings in flight, as well as perched Peregrine Falcon, Solomons Sea Eagle, Buff-headed Coucals, Ultramarine Kingfishers and Yellow-bibbed Lories.

Regular stops and short walks provided views of Steel-blue Flycatchers, Chestnut-bellied Monarchs, and Finsch's Pygmy Parrot, and a brief view of a Woodford's Rail – which are far noisier than any other rail I have encountered, with a pair of birds sounding like an entire flock. We spent a lot of time

View of the Lunnga River (Colin Miskelly) with Solomons Sea Eagle photo inset (Joshua Bergmark/Ornis Ornithological Expeditions).

searching flocks of Brown-winged Starlings and Metallic Starlings for the local-endemic White-eyed Starling, but ended up with a 'maybe' rather than a confirmed sighting. The same fruiting tree held a variety of pigeons and parrots, including Red-knobbed Imperial Pigeon, Claret-breasted Fruit-dove, MacKinlay's Cuckoo-dove, Eclectus Parrot, Song Parrot, and the brightly-coloured Cardinal Lory.

After a 1-hour drive back to Honiara from Parangiju, we boarded a 16-seater Twin Otter for the 40-minute flight to the island of Santa Isabel. The grass airstrip servicing the town of Buala is on the small island of Fera, 2.5km offshore – a short boat ride. We had planned to stay two nights at Buala, but ended up staying for five – more on that later.

Tirotonga and the frogmouth

The focus of our visit to Santa Isabel was a 3-day stay at Tirotonga, a village set among forest at 500m above sea level, and reached by a steep track from Buala. The walk up (with our overnight gear carried by porters) provided an introduction to some of the local birds, including Island Imperial Pigeon, Solomons Cockatoo and the endemic Yellow-throated White-eye.

Rain started falling as we reached Tirotonga, and it poured down for the rest of the afternoon, providing a reminder that we were in a rain forest. Fortunately, our stay was long enough that we could wait for the frequent showers to clear before venturing out. The main target birds at Tirotonga are Solomons Frogmouth and Black-faced Pitta, though the latter proved to be frustratingly elusive – heard but not seen, despite trying playback of calls at multiple sites.

The frogmouths give a piercing whistle at night – not dissimilar to the sound I was able to make with my shepherd's whistle, but the birds responded better to our guides' whistles. It took several attempts to get a good look at a frogmouth. There was too much rain the first night, and too much noise – from a village fundraiser – on the second. The music stopped shortly before midnight, and we were roused from our sleep about 2am in order to see and hear this bizarre bird (the only member of a new genus, coined in 2007), only a couple of hundred metres from where we were staying.

The villagers at Tirotonga are subsistence farmers, working small plots cut from the jungle. The forest around the village is criss-crossed by trails linking the plots, and it would be easy to get geographically embarrassed without a local guide to lead the way. There was much to see and hear in the Tirotonga forest, with highlights including a West Solomons Boobook owl disturbed at its daytime roost, White-billed Crows, Oriole Whistlers, Yellow-faced Mynas (a native species) and Ultramarine Kingfishers.

Making the most of being stuck

We had intended to stay a further night at Buala before flying back to Honiara, but the flight was cancelled three days in a row due to concern that passing rain squalls would have made the grass runway unsafe. As we had to be prepared to depart at short notice, we couldn't travel far, but still found plenty to explore and see.

Boldly-patterned Beach Kingfishers were the most noisy and conspicuous of three kingfisher species around Ghaseali Resort,

Solomons Frogmouth: *Joshua Bergmark/ Ornis Ornithological Expeditions.*

Claret-breasted Fruit Dove*: Oscar Thomas.*

Buff-headed Coucals: *Oscar Thomas.*

Channel-billed Cuckoo: *Imogen Warren.*

Long-tailed Cuckoo: *Adam Clarke.*

where Solomons Cockatoos were feeding on green fruit in a nearby tree. A walk along the road 3km to the west led to a large fruiting fig tree full of Island Imperial Pigeons, Claret-breasted Fruit-doves, Yellow-faced Mynas and two Channel-billed Cuckoos. These enormous frugivorous cuckoos are rare vagrants to the Solomon Islands (they mainly migrate between Australia and New Guinea, further to the west), and were among the most unexpected birds encountered during our stay.

We were able to arrange two visits to Fera, which had quite different birds from the main island. The mown airstrip and adjacent shoreline had a good diversity of migratory waders, including 20 Ruddy Turnstones, 18 Pacific Golden Plovers, 8 Common Sandpipers, 4 Whimbrels, and a Grey-tailed Tattler, with several Striated Herons and a Nankeen Night Heron further around the coast.

Our boatman dug up a Melanesian Megapode egg on our first visit, and I was determined to see the bird that produced it on our second visit. I failed in my quest to find a megapode on a long solo walk, and was rather dismayed to learn that my companions had meanwhile seen one at the airfield terminal, where we had stepped ashore. Fortunately, the bird soon returned, and so I got to see the 'chicken' as well as its egg.

The first birds encountered when we stepped ashore on Fera were a pair of Island Monarchs. As hinted at by their name, these birds are common on small offshore islands, but are rarely encountered on the larger islands in the Solomons. While watching them, I noticed a larger bird moving nearby, and was thrilled to get a brief glimpse of a Koekoeā Long-tailed Cuckoo among the mangrove foliage. I later calculated that this bird had flown between 3,700 and 4,500 km to get to Fera from where it had hatched (or last bred) back in Aotearoa. And its carbon footprint to make the voyage was way less than the three flights and 8 hours in the air that I took to get from Wellington to Fera via Brisbane and Honiara.

Finding a way back to Honiara

After the small plane didn't turn up for a third day in a row, we decided to catch a boat back to Honiara. The MV Uta Princess II

Woodford's Rail: *Greg Roberts.*

Megapode egg: *Colin Miskelly.*

Melanesian Megapode: *Michael Szabo.*

Beach Kingfisher: *Greg Roberts.*

Sahul Sunbird: *Michael Szabo.*

Black-naped Tern: *Michael Szabo.*

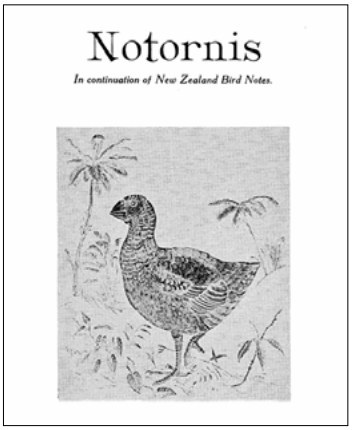
cargo and passenger ferry sails between Buala port and Honiara twice a week, and we thought some pelagic birding would make up for missing out on our planned visit to Savo Island. After boarding at 5.50am, we eventually got underway at 7.50am, and spent the next 8.5 hours cruising east then south around the coast of Santa Isabel, stopping regularly to pick up produce, drop off cargo, and pick-up and drop off passengers. It was a great cultural experience, but seabirds were scarce until we encountered huge flocks of noddies (and a few Common Terns and Grey-backed Terns) in the bay off Sidu and Tanabuli Island.

We cleared the final port on the tiny island of Sigana at 4.30pm, and the birds started to get more interesting as we headed south into the open sea. First Black-naped Terns and a pair of Eastern Ospreys, then more noddies and Grey-backed Terns, Brown Boobies, Sooty Terns, Lesser Frigatebirds, a single Beck's Petrel…and then darkness.

We reached Honiara port at 9.45pm, two days after we were due back in Brisbane, and during the bustle of the Pacific Islands Forum. Fortunately, Tourism Solomons took care of finding accommodation and re-booked flights out of Honiara. We squeezed in a final morning of birding in the Honiara Botanic Gardens, where highlights included a Variable Goshawk, more hornbills, and a pair of Yellow-bibbed Lories, as well as three species of fruit-doves calling from the tree-tops, followed by a brief visit to the Betikama wetlands, where the Great White Egrets and Purple Swamphens looked suspiciously like Kōtuku and Pūkeko.

It was a great adventure, with good company and excellent wildlife. I look forward to exploring more distant islands on my next visit. For the birders among you, I saw or heard 84 bird species during my stay, with 50 lifers.

Colin Miskelly is Curator of Birds at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and Editor of Notornis. He travelled to the Solomon Islands as a guest of Tourism Solomons in September 2025. Their website has more information about birdwatching in the Solomon Islands: https://www.visitsolomons.com.sb/



https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Notornis_4_1_cover-contents.pdf

Artistic representation of a North Canterbury beach 62 million years ago: *Canterbury Museum/Tom Simpson.*

Transformation of the *Notornis* digital archive

The *Notornis* digital archive was launched in 2006, and was truly transformative. For the first time, the entire back-catalogue of our scientific journal was available online (and for free), with every issue back to 1943 scanned and loaded on the OSNZ (now Birds New Zealand) website. However, resource constraints led to the decision to load all issues published before 1990 as whole-issue PDFs. You could search for individual articles, but the hyperlinks from their landing pages would lead to a pdf of an entire journal issue, which was often more than 70 pages.

About five years ago, Ian Armitage started on the painstaking task of splitting the whole-issue PDFs into individual articles, working back from 1989. I started on a parallel project in March this year, registering each article with a DOI (digital object identifier), working back from 2025. This progressed rapidly through the 'born digital' era (back to 2006), but slowed after that, depending on the quality of the scan. Crossref DOI registration requires 'Literature cited' lists to be loaded for each article, and creating these lists from poor-quality scans became the rate-limiting step. Dallas Bishop was recruited to assist with preparing the lists; we soon caught up with Ian, then worked as a team-of-three back through the entire archive. The final step was scanning and cropping all of Tim Lovegrove's 53 years of annual indexes and publishing them in digital format for the first time.

The project was completed in mid-October, with all 5,151 items in the entire archive re-published as individual-article pdfs, each registered with a unique DOI. Note that Birds New Zealand ceased producing an annual index to *Notornis* after volume 70 (2023). Since then, the journal has been published solely in digital format. Each issue is still published as a 'Full Journal Issue', where you can search for any word or phrase in the issue using a 'Ctrl-F' search, rendering an index redundant.

As the project required opening every landing page and PDF, we took the opportunity to correct hundreds of errors and omissions, and to standardise the appearance of the landing pages (including converting all scientific names into italics, and adding missing Abstracts and Keywords). However, we couldn't fix errors that appeared in the original articles, including an embarrassing number of misspelt scientific names, and even a few authors who apparently couldn't spell their own names!

An innovation that was easy to implement in the digital era was adding corrections (including corrigenda, errata, peccavi etc) that were published in subsequent issues of the journal on to the end of the original articles; 54 such composite PDFs are now in the archive. This delve into the archive revealed what prolific writers some of the early members were. Field guide author and long-time *Notornis* editor Dick Sibson led the way, with an astonishing 153 papers and short notes! The Publications Archive can be found via the Publications tab on the Birds New Zealand website home page.

With grateful thanks to Ian and Dallas for their dedication to the task.

COLIN MISKELLY, *NOTORNIS* EDITOR

Early penguins had long dagger-like bills

A new study has described four species of extinct penguin from fossils recovered over the past 20 years from rocks dating from 62.5 to 58 million years ago in the Waipara Valley, North Canterbury. The four species range in size from an Emperor Penguin down to a Hoiho Yellow-eyed Penguin, and had long bills which were either used to spear fish or like forceps to pluck fish from the water, according to co-author Paul Scofield of Canterbury Museum. In the species where a bill was recovered, it was extremely long and pointed, measuring about 65% of the entire skull length. "It's a strange thing. There is nothing like it today," he said. "When you compare fossils to existing breeds you usually find something similar but none of today's diving birds have similar bills."

Co-authors Gerald Mayr, Vanesa De Pietri, James Profitt, Jacob Blokland, Julia Clarke, Leigh Love, Al Mannering, Erica Brouch, Catherine Reid and Paul Scofield from Senckenberg Research Institute, University of Canterbury, University of Arizona, Flinders University, University of Texas, Canterbury Museum and GNS Science said the findings reinforce the claim that Aotearoa New Zealand is the birthplace of penguins. The new study, *Multiple exceptionally preserved fossils from the Paleocene Waipara Greensand inform the diversity of the oldest stem group Sphenisciformes and the formation of their diving adaptations, was published in the Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society* in August. Link to paper: https://academic.oup.com/zoolinnean/article/204/4/zlaf080/8230366?login=false

Close relatives of Emperor and King penguins in Zealandia 3 million years ago

An extinct penguin relative of Emperor and King penguins in the genus *Aptenodytes* lived in Zealandia three million years ago when global temperatures were about 3°Celcius above those of the pre-industrial era, according to a study describing a new fossil skull found on the Taranaki coast. The study co-authors say the extinct penguin had a much stronger and longer bill and probably looked more like a King Penguin but was much bigger. Overall, the new skull is 31% longer than the skull of an Emperor Penguin, which is a species that can grow more than a metre tall and weigh over 35 kilograms.

The new study, *Emperor penguin's fossil relatives inhabited subtropical waters*, by co-authors Alan Tennyson and Felix Marx of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa, Daniel Thomas of the University of Auckland, and Dan Ksepka from The Bruce Museum, was published in the *Journal of Paleontology* in September. The fossil skull was discovered by Kerr Sharpe-Young and the co-authors have acknowledged the importance of Ngāti Ruanui and Ngāruahine supporting the collection and research of fossils from their rohe in Taranaki. More details here: https://theconversation.com/close-relatives-of-emperor-penguins-lived-in-nz-some-3-million-years-ago

Nankeen Night Heron, Upukongaro (Whanganui): *Kirsten Olsen.*

Kākā and Tui in Kowhai, Greytown: *Joel Gilbertson.*

NORTHLAND

Ilse Corkery was our August speaker, describing fascinating details from her guided birdwatching trip to the Solomon Islands, which was organised in October 2024 by Tourism Solomons and featured in the March 2025 magazine. She explained how each of the sites she visited on the islands of Guadalcanal, Kolombangara and Rennell had a wide variety of endemic tropical birds, from parrots to fantails, and a very different geology. So, visiting the Solomon Islands with a knowledgeable birdwatching guide is rewarding, as many of its colourful species are easy to see.

In September, Dai Morgan reported back the results of the Whangarei 5-Minute Bird Counts, part of which our members carry out on behalf of Northland Regional Council. He compared the Whangarei results with those from other urban areas in New Zealand, which prompted a discussion about the impact of restricting counting to June and the likely effects on the detection of species such as Riroriro Grey Warbler and Kōtare Sacred Kingfisher.

In October, we planned to have a nest search but the weather leading up to it was so poor that no young birds had been detected, so we changed it to a general quiz about birds. It was interesting to hear what members knew, and to find out that Melva Ward knew from previous experience how many hen's eggs made up the equivalent volume of an Ostrich egg.

Also in October, it was announced that the expansion of the eastern Northport container terminal had been approved. The expansion permits can be exercised at any time in the next 20 years. The western expansion, which includes a dry dock, is on the government's fast-track list and has yet to be applied for. It is unclear what the impact of both expansions would be on the use of Marsden Bay by foraging birds, which is one of the very few areas where the public can easily get close to feeding birds in Whangarei Harbour. There is already considerable urbanisation in the Bream Bay area, and the habitat for birds is being squeezed there by the loss of freshwater inputs, the industrial use of what was formerly farmland, and the loss of beaches to 4WD recreation.

– TONY BEAUCHAMP

AUCKLAND

Spring is a busy time for us with our annual surveys. Our Shakespear Regional Park Survey (28/9) had 13 participants. After a few years with declines caused by Stoat incursions, there was a recovery in the numbers of some vulnerable species with counts of 18 Red-crowned Kākāriki, 18 Hihi, 22 Tieke NI Saddleback, 7 Mātātā Fernbird, 2 Tutuwai NI Robin and 82 Popokatea Whitehead. Our overnight Motutapu Island Survey with the Motutapu Island Restoration Trust (4-5/10) had 14 participants. Species seen included 18 Takahe, 19 Spotless Crake, 2 Kākā, 253 Red-crowned Kākāriki, 103 Tieke NI Saddleback and 174 Korimako Bellbird. An interesting find was a Marsh Crake seen in a raupo-fringed wetland, a first record for Motutapu. A short nocturnal count found 1 NI Brown Kiwi and 2 Ruru along the Centennial Track. Individual members' counts outside the survey transects confirmed the continued presence of Weweia NZ Dabchick on the island. Our Puweto Spotless Crake survey at Orangihina in Te Atatu on 27/9 found 5 Puweto, 20 Mātātā and 2 Dunnocks.

Public guided walks and activities included a Kia Ora Kuaka Event and Guided Bird Walk at Ambury Park on 21/9. Kevin Barker and Olga Brochner provided a fantastic talk about the birds and conservation work there with 62 people attending. Our Michael Taylor Memorial Guided Bird Walk at Cornwall Park was on 14/9 when stormy weather reduced numbers to 19. A total of 22 common species were seen including Ring-necked Pheasant, Californian Quail and Paradise Shelduck.

The Pakiri beach patrol on 25/5 found just 8 birds of 5 species including 2 Little Penguin, 2 Fluttering Shearwater, 1 Hutton's Shearwater, 1 White-faced Heron and 2 Kākā. The 2 Kākā were found within 50m of each other. Interestingly, this is the third time when we have found 2 Kākā beach wrecked close together on this 11km section of the beach. The Muriwai beach patrol on 2/8 found 1 Australasian Gannet, 1 Fluttering Shearwater, 1 Fairy Prion, 1 Slender-billed Prion and 1 Song Thrush. During the Karekare beach patrol on 6/9 we found a breeding pair of Banded Dotterel (a very rare breeding species in our region), with beach wrecked birds including 2 Fluttering Shearwaters, 1 Hutton's Shearwaters and 1 Australian Magpie. The Muriwai Beach on 11/10 found 1 Australasian Gannet, 1 Grey-faced Petrel, 1 White-headed Petrel, 3 Fluttering Shearwaters, 2 Hutton's Shearwaters, 1 Fairy Prion, 1 White-faced Storm Petrel, 1 White-fronted Tern and 1 Wild Turkey.

Unusual birds have included an Eastern Barn Owl found beach wrecked on Karekare Beach by Adrian Riegen on 5/9, possibly a first record of this species for the Beach Patrol Scheme, and an Australian (formerly Gull-billed) Tern was seen along the Whau River by Ben Ackerley on 27/9. The Muriwai gannet colony continues to be a great location for vagrant birds with a Sooty Tern briefly seen by Simon Runting on 1/11 which was seen again the next 2 days. Lastly, Kathryn Legrove found a Common Sandpiper at Otara Creek weir on 2/11 which was seen again over the next 5 days.

– IAN McLEAN

SOUTH AUCKLAND

In September, Sue Frostick spoke about the birds she saw on her road trip from Darwin to Broome. Of the 30 species she recorded that were new for her, the highlights were Radjah Shelduck, Pied Imperial Pigeon, White-bellied Sea Eagle, Northern Rosella and Comb-crested Jacana. October's speaker was Ellen Webb, who presented on her work at Waipu last summer, where her Master's project focused on improving nest site protection strategies for birds such as the critically endangered NZ Fairy Terns by providing shelter for the chicks from aerial predators and high temperatures. The shelters trialled included driftwood, plywood A-frames and terracotta tunnels. She concluded the chicks prioritise natural shelters (driftwood), only using artificial shelters if no other options, including plants, exist.

Several South Auckland members also belong to the Pukorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust, which is celebrating its 50th Birthday this year. At a recent lunch marking the occasion, we were delighted when Birds New Zealand Past President David Lawrie was presented with a certificate and a handsome book to acknowledge the many contributions that he has made to the Trust over those 50 years.
In August, 45 Cattle Egrets were seen in the paddocks around Maioro, and sightings at Kidds Shellbank included a Semi-palmated Plover, Red-necked Stint, Shore Plover, 66 Caspian Terns and 37 Royal Spoonbills. On 11/10, Tony Harbraken saw a total of 373 Spotted Shags from Matingarahi to Waharau of which 160 were heading south south-east in flocks of 20-30 after leaving the Tarata Rocks area where at least another 121 were still roosting on rocks south of Tarata Rocks. The first godwits arrived back at Pukorokoro Miranda in mid-August

with 75 juveniles in the flock of about 4,500 godwits in mid-October. A 21-year-old godwit seen at Colbeck (Awhitu) last year, returned, which had been banded at Miranda in 2004 as a 1-year-old.

The Little Pied Shag colony behind the Warehouse near Auckland Airport had 23 active nests on 28/9. Eleven Fernbirds were seen/heard over a 600m transect at Puhinui Reserve on 17/10 and 2 Australasian Bitterns were seen there in late September. Lastly, 4 Kākā were seen at Tuakau in October and we have had reports of several Kākā regularly roosting in trees near Onewhero Golf Course.

– SUE FROSTICK

WAIKATO

Our region tried something new by organising a *Birds and Bites* evening in August, at which we had a pot luck dinner and then watched the film *The Legend of Pale Male*. It is a true account of how a Red-tailed Hawk that took up residence on a high-rise building opposite Central Park in New York City gained many keen followers over the years it lived there. It was a wonderful feel-good movie which shows how getting to know an individual bird can prompt some people to start birdwatching and have a positive impact on many people's lives in a busy metropolis.

A trip down to Marokopa in late August to see Australasian Bittern at a reliable wintering site was once again successful with 4 or 5 birds seen, plus Wild Turkey and an Emu! We also met a Birds New Zealand member from Taranaki, and a very passionate local, both interested in seeing a bittern. September was our planning meeting for 2026 and our October speaker was John Innes who has spent 40 years studying small pest mammals, their control, and their impacts on wildlife. His talk discussed the roles of predation and food supply as alternative limiting factors for forest birds.

Speaking of Matuku-hūrepo, I circumnavigated the Kopuatai Peat Dome on 25/10, checking various access points to NZ's largest peat swamp. At least 3 booming males were heard, and another bird was flushed from a stop bank (a bit fewer than normal). It was nice to hear a few Common Redpolls around as well. Lastly, Arctic breeding migrant waders are returning to the Firth of Thames and across the Motu. Here's hoping for some successful west coast harbour surveys in November!

– RUSSELL CANNINGS

BAY OF PLENTY/VOLCANIC PLATEAU

Little Egrets have been the highlight of the region this quarter, with single birds being seen in their usual spot at Omokoroa, and elsewhere in stunning breeding plumage (Bayfair Reserve, Mount Maunganui). Australasian Little Grebes have returned to the Waimangu Valley, Rotomahana outlet where breeding has occurred, with many sightings reported via *eBird* and the BirdingNZ forum. Our shorebird counts will be on the second weekend in November. For future counts, please contact Warwick on buckmanw@xtra.co.nz. Thanks for the last ten years, I am signing off as Regional Representative. E noho ra.

– PAUL CUMING

GISBORNE/WAIROA

On the *eBird* Global Big Day in October we had a joint birding weekend with Hawke's Bay members. My daughter (9) and I saw 53 species, which is a solid number for the region, and she was enthusiastic about each one. It was great to catch up with and share a meal with some fellow birders.

Whinray Ecological Trust has had a successful kīwī season with some more chicks ready to go back out to where they were hatched. It's great to have that project in our region. In September, I watched Banded Dotterels feeding in flooded paddocks near Nuhaka. We had a quite solid record of a Kookaburra at Eastwood Hill Arboretum, but no photo or audio recording unfortunately. We've also had some good participation in the Matuku-hūrepo Muster with booming heard at a few sites, and a new Fernbird location was found in the Wharerata hills. While there are a good number of sites in the Wairoa district, this is just the 5th known site in this region

We've also had an increase in local engagement and interest in birds this spring, with Kōtuku, Pīpīwharauroa, and Kārearea being regularly reported, as well as a range of more common birds reported nesting (including Australasian Shoveler ducklings at a local wetland).

– MALCOLM RUTHERFORD

HAWKE'S BAY

Wild weather stopped our August field trip, but September turned on the spring sunshine for the now-annual Welcome the Godwits event, held with the Ahuriri Estuary Protection Society. Some 40–50 people visited the Scrapes at Te Whanganui-a-Orotū (Ahuriri Estuary) saw not only Kuaka Bar-tailed Godwits but also Kuriri Pacific Golden Plover, Pohowera Banded Dotterels, Huahou Red Knots, and a Red-necked Stint.

Our October field trip was a weekend in Mahia, excellently organised by RR Bernie Kelly to take account of the tides, the Global Big Day, and bittern booming season. Nine of our members were joined by 5 Gisborne members who variously went birding at Wairoa River mouth, Whakaki Lagoon, Mahia Beach, Opoutama wetlands, Auroa Point, Mangawhio Lagoon and Oraka. Species recorded included Kuaka, Pohowera, Tūturiwhatu NZ Dotterel, Tarāpuka Black-billed Gull, Tara White-fronted Tern,Australasian Bittern Matuku-hūrepo (3–4 heard booming, 2 seen flying!), Mātātā Fernbird (several heard and seen), Kōtuku Ngutupapa Royal Spoonbill, as well as 2 Rooks and 3 Spotted Doves.

Of interest in August was a dark morph Pīwakawaka NZ Fantail at Maraetotara Falls and a good number (~15) of Pohowera seen at low tide on the Tukituki River bed. The seasonal Kōtuku White Heron returned to Grange Creek, Haumoana, on 29/8, before being spotted for the first time in the Pirimai Stream on several mornings mid to late September. A Cattle Egret was also seen in pasture beside the Pirimai Stream on 17/9. The usual mixed Tara and Tarāpunga Red-billed Gull colony (with the odd possible Tarāpuka) has started nesting at Ahuriri marina.

Pīpīwharauroa Shining Cuckoo started to be heard in Hawke's Bay from the 22/9. A report of a Brown Booby offshore from Westshore was received by Sav Saville on 1/10. There have been several reports of "boil-ups" at the Tukituki River mouth involving hundreds of terns and gulls during October. Two Pūweto Spotless Crakes have been seen at different times at Grange Creek, Haumoana, indicating likely nesting activity. More than 2,500 Pakahā Fluttering Shearwaters were seen off the Clive area, as well as 1 Ngutu Pare Wrybill, 6 Huahou, 2 Arctic Skua, and 2 giant petrels. Two Rooks were seen flying over Havelock North plus a single bird near Pandora Pond, and 7 or 8 Kākā at Makahu Saddle.

– THALIA SACHTLEBEN

TARANAKI

Our August field trip was to the Rapanui Oi Grey-faced Petrel colony 58km north of New Plymouth where 7 of us met 2 of the trustees who gave us a talk about ongoing work and guided us. Just on dusk the birds started coming in with some whizzing around calling in the air and some on the ground. An estimate of 50+ was probably well under the actual number seen before we reluctantly departed at 7:30pm, as birds were still flying in. This colony is a small remnant of what it once was but it is a credit to all the people who have given of their time over many years.

Our September field trip was to Hollards Gardens in south Taranaki under the shadow of Mt Taranaki. Rob Wheeler led but it was so windy that people struggled to remain upright and only 7 members of the public attended. The highlight was a Ruru in full view. Tansy Bliss, Kaitiaki ranger at Pukorokoro Miranda spoke at our August meeting, reporting that Arctic breeding migratory shorebirds are returning there in good numbers with new Bar-tailed Godwit Kuaka arriving every day.

I attended the annual 'Wild for Taranaki' biodiversity forum, an inspiring day with a range of speakers covering a wide range of topics. The highlight was a lecture by Dr Emily Roberts on the increasing number and spread of Oi Grey-faced Petrels along the Taranaki coast, with birds prospecting and nesting as far south as Opunake. Fences are being built at some sites to keep people, dogs and bikes out where pest control is in place.

Abysmal October weather meant that Team Taranaki abandoned the Global Big Day event. One keen member made a mid-morning escape when there was a slight break in the weather and headed down to Lake Rotokare, managing to record a very creditable 43 species. In mid-October there were 2 of our 4 banded NZ Dotterels and 4 Pacific Golden Plovers on the beach at Waiongana. I will have migrated back to Pukorokoro to resume my role as shorebird guide there by the time you read this. Rob Wheeler will be our acting RR, secretary and treasurer. Huge thanks to you, Rob.

– PETER FRYER

WHANGANUI

The Whanganui River Estuary has seen, over the past month, groups of up to 25 juvenile Kuaka Bar-tailed Godwits arriving after their direct flight from Alaska. Some are seen with drooping wings. This is an amazing feat considering they are only 3 or 4 months old. The birds stay a day or 2 and then move on, where to we don't know. Some of us enjoyed a recent visit from Dan Ruthrauff, an American ornithologist who has worked for many years on shorebirds in Alaska. He was thrilled to see juvenile godwits at close range, after their migration, feeding out on the mud. He said to us, "How do they know to bore down for crabs - they do nothing like that in Alaska".

Some of us have made several trips to the Manawatu River Estuary at Foxton Beach in

Flock of 26 Glossy Ibis, Grovetown Lagoon, Marlborough (14/10/25): *Brendan Tucker.*

White-winged Black Tern, Nelson Boulder Bank: *Chris Bernard.*

search of the godwit with leg flag AJD but we did not see him there among the godwits, Red Knots, Pacific Golden Plovers and Wrybills. We also saw a Red-necked Stint, an amazing energetic Little Egret, and a NZ Dotterel. I visited Whanganui River again on 1/11 but this time I found and photographed AJD there (see photo on page 2). This confirms AJD's 18th annual migration circuit from Alaka to New Zealand!

The Nankeen Night Herons at Upokongaro near Whanganui continue to please the many visitors that come to see them. Recently we saw several having a bath in the stream below the café back garden, and what a good show they put on. Nesting is just getting underway and already we have heard a chick calling.

At our most recent bi-monthly meeting, Peter Frost gave a talk about birds as pollinators. No formal field trips have been undertaken, but many members have been out and about, either alone or in small groups. Reports include a Kākā seen by Jim Norris at Bason Botanical Gardens, and a group of 11 Cattle Egrets on a farm 20 minutes north of Whanganui, including some in breeding plumage. – *PAUL GIBSON*

MANAWATU

The annual 'Welcome to the Birds' event at Foxton Beach was held on 27/9. There was a great turnout and as usual, Associate Professor Phil Battley gave a fascinating talk about the godwits. Three members joined our eBird October Big Day trip which started at Foxton Beach. Unfortunately, it was low tide that the morning and it rained, so we didn't see many birds there. We went via Lake Dudding to Bushy Park where we had great encounters with Tieke Saddleback, Hihi and Toutouwai NI Robin. Then we drove back via Upokongaro, where we were lucky to enjoy watching the Nankeen Night Herons playing in the stream below the café. We also stopped a couple of times at the roadside to get a few more species on our trip report (https://ebird.org/tripreport/419876). We saw 52 species altogether. Our November field trip will be our Spring/Summer wader census.

Three members did a bittern survey at Pukepuke Lagoon (permit obtained from DOC) as part of the Great Matuku Muster in October. They observed 2 bitterns in flight on a reconnaissance trip and 1 bittern booming on all 3 evenings. The eBird trip report can be accessed here: (https://ebird.org/tripreport/418622). We saw the most beautiful sunset and moon rise there. For the November muster we will be 2 teams. The second will cover Lake Omanu (permit required from Fish & Game).

A black Kaki Black Stilt was seen at Manawatu River estuary in August. At the end of October, the highest counts of waders were 190 Kuaka Bar-tailed Godwits, 15 Huahou Red Knots and 4 Kuriri Pacific Golden Plovers. A Red-necked Stint and 1 NZ Dotterel were seen at the estuary in October with the former staying for some time. Five Cattle Egrets were seen in a paddock by Kuku Beach Road in late September and early October, and 1 was seen in a paddock on a farm near Balance. There have been numerous sightings of Kārearea NZ Falcons around Palmerston North. The best sighting was probably by Cleland Wallace, who saw 1 predating a bird in a tree in his garden! Our monthly meetings, held on the second Wednesday of the month, continue to be a great attraction with attendance of 12–20 members.

– *KIRSTEN OLSEN*

WAIRARAPA

Our August filed trip was a complete circuit of the Wairio Wetland between Boggy Pond and Wairarapa Moana. We counted 42 Royal Spoonbills at the Boggy Pond site where they formerly nested, but it is now mostly too low in the water. Walking the Wairio Wetland circuit we flushed several Australasian Bitterns which took flight, with one caught on camera. Other highlights were Common Redpolls feeding on seedheads and large numbers of NZ Scaup, Australasian Shovelers and Grey Teal among the 34 species we counted that day.

September saw us braving the wild winds at Riversdale Beach. It was very encouraging to see both NZ Dotterels (10) and Banded Dotterels thriving (5) there. So much work has been done with fencing and signage around their preferred nesting site which is now paying off! We also encountered on the beach a large flock of 70 White-fronted Terns as well as some Caspian Terns. At the south end of Riversdale, we walked the loop track and encountered Tui, Bellbirds, Dunnock, Skylark etc. Also, in September we enjoyed an amazing photographic journey among the birds of Queensland courtesy of Joel Gilbertson.

The Waingawa River track to Mitre Flats was our destination in October. The track covers farmland, regrowth and original forest and riverbed. The highlights included one NZ Tomtit and numerous Kereru, included a flock of 12. We also met with Tui, Bellbird, NZ Fantail and all the finches, adding to our count of 28 species.

In October we welcomed Michael Szabo to speak to our group, who told us the story of his book *Wild Wellington: A guide to the wildlife and wild places of Te Upoko-o-te-Ika* and the new companion 2026 calendar of the same name. We discussed the fortunes of many bird species in the Greater Wellington area, and now have plenty of exciting possibilities for future field trips to some of Wellington's wild places. Afterwards, one member reported seeing a pair of Caspian Terns with a nest on Ōnoke Spit. Lastly, Greytown has been the home for the last few months of a Kākā with multiple visits and sightings. It is usually found in the flowering Kowhai having a good time and annoying the local Tui. – *OLIVER DRUCE*

WELLINGTON

Our speakers this past quarter have presented on the Matuku Muster national bittern survey, the Kāpiti Ecological Restoration Project, and "MythBusting de-extinction to sort fact from fiction". Many thanks to Jim O'Malley and Nic Rawlence. Our November speaker will be Colin Miskelly on cryptic prion identifications. We are looking forward to the second of Wellington's in-person only meetings for the year on 1/12 (first Monday on the month) and upcoming field trips, including to see the Kāpiti Ecological Restoration Project site.

Interesting recent sightings have included a trio of Wrybill on the Seatoun coast (27/9), a pair of Cirl Buntings by Moa Point Rd (29/10), 2 Little Terns at Waikanae Sandspit (17/10), 1 White-headed Petrel and 1 Pomarine Skua seen off Pukerua Bay (27/10), 1 NZ Pipit on Mana Island, and a double-banded Fluttering Shearwater found by a beach patrol. A flock of 300+ White-fronted Terns was seen at Waikanae Sandspit on 2/11 with some displaying and mating, raising the prospect they may breed there this summer.

Another interesting sighting was a Northern NZ Dotterel which had been banded as a chick in January 2023 near Waitohu Stream, Ōtaki, which seems to have been spotted in October 2025 at Whenuakua Estuary (Coromandel Peninsula). While the NZ Birds Online website states that NZ Dotterels undertake a maximum dispersal of "850 km round trip" it is always exciting to see evidence of longer dispersal, and a reminder to always check wading birds for leg bands or flags, just in case it's a very well-travelled bird! Lastly, an Adelie Penguin seen 1.5 km along the beach from Waitangi on main Chatham Island on 3/11 was a first record for the Chatham Islands.

– *ANNEMIEKE HAMILTON*

NELSON

The arrival of spring has a huge impact on birdlife at Farewell Spit and Motueka Spit. With the arrival of migratory birds, many members have been out looking for banded birds and rarities, or simply enjoying the spectacle. Another spring highlight was the White-winged Black Tern in breeding plumage seen at the Nelson Boulder Bank and adjacent wetlands in late August.

Marian and Alec Milne presented on 'Shearwaters and other birds at Whararikiʻ at our August monthly meeting. The project, now in its third year, has relocated and established a Pakahā Fluttering Shearwater colony at the base of Farewell Spit. Success has recently been confirmed with the return of adult birds first relocated there as chicks. We had 25 at our September meeting where Robin Toy presented an informative 'Quest for the World's Most Unusual Bird' talk. It was very entertaining and the Hoatzin came out on top. Not to be outdone, October featured Sandy Toy's excellent talk about the successful efforts to revitalise the Whio population in Kahurangi from a single bird to the current population of 60. She also introduced the new book written by her and Robin, *Caring for Kahurangi*, about the inspiring history of the Friends of Flora.

Disappointingly, the 2 broods of Australian Wood Duck that hatched recently have either been predated or possibly drowned. Ramps will be installed there for any future broods. Just prior to the annual census of Red-billed Gulls on Nelson Boulder Bank, the entire colony relocated to Port Nelson! We are unsure why and whether breeding will occur at this frequently disturbed environment.

We are happy to report David Melville's submissions on behalf of our branch to secure positive environmental outcomes from bylaw changes have not been in vain. Last month the Tasman District Council approved the Responsible Camping Bylaw so that 2 areas significant to birdlife in Motueka are now 'prohibited' camping areas, and a consent for a Mapua boat ramp was declined thus reducing potential mobilisation of the toxic contaminants in marine sediments there. We are continuing to monitor for any evidence of highly pathogenic avian influenza in the Farewell Spit gannet colony and participation in the regular trips there are understandably oversubscribed. Lastly, as part of the 'Love Bitterns Project Count' 8 individual males were heard across 6 listening stations at Mangarakau with another seen in the Puponga area. Kia hari te matakitaki manu. *– PAUL BENNETT*

MARLBOROUGH

Simon Lamb gave a fascinating talk to members in August about the Toanui Flesh-footed Shearwaters on Tītī Island in the outer Marlborough Sounds. Simon spent 10 days on Tītī Island conducting a population estimate primarily for Toanui as well as Tītī Sooty Shearwaters with the two species having their own distinct colonies in most cases, but some mixed colonies. Tītī outnumber Toanui on the island by about two to one but Toanui have shown a slight increase in numbers since the last surveys several years ago. Simon also presented a great account of all the other species of birds and other wildlife that they saw during their stay on the island.

Brendan Tucker photographed a flock of 26 Glossy Ibis at Grovetown Lagoon at 11am on 14/10 flying near the flooded paddock area over the berm, west of the lagoon pathway. That was only 2 less than Will Parsons saw when he photographed a flock of 28 at Dillons Point on 6/10/19. Lastly, a member of the public reported seeing a Kea in the forest at Storeys Creek near Kaituna. Kākā are known to frequent this area occasionally but the person provided a photo which confirmed it was an adult Kea.

– PATRICK CROWE

CANTERBURY

Phil Crutchley reported the first Shining Cuckoo calling in Canterbury (that I'm aware of) in Governors Bay on 23/9, followed by Joy and Paul Sagar on 26/9 in Pleasant Valley, Geraldine. On 15/9, Ben Ackerley, Samuel Amaris, and Judah Gray found a pair of banded Black Stilts in the flooded wetland at the Halswell River mouth on Te Waihora Lake Ellesmere. Ben reports both birds were hatched in captivity from wild eggs collected from the Tasman delta, where they were released after being raised. It will be interesting to see if our November survey picks them up again. A census of the Banded Dotterel population at Kaitorete showed numbers have increased and they are once again more common following intensive predator control efforts by DOC, Christchurch City Council and Pest Free Banks Peninsula. Cattle Egrets are still present in the paddocks surrounding Te Waihora, with Warwick Allen most recently counting 17. Southern Crested Grebes continue their slow expansion, with 1 spotted several times on the Avon River.

Our members' meetings continue to be well-attended, no doubt drawn in by some interesting speakers. Nick Allen ran us through the bird highlights of his trip to Portugal, and Andrew Crossland and Phil Crutchley on their visit to Bali-Flores hunting for wading bird locations. David Melville gave an inspiring talk about wading birds, showing how the data collected from our regular surveys is being used to determine species trends and inform conservation management both nationally and internationally. We've also been having short tutorials before the main talk on some bird identification challenges, most recently David Thomas on sandpiper species, so we've all 'swotted up' ahead of our November wading bird surveys. Mid-week rambles led by Janet Burton, Sharon Lake and Bev Alexander continue to be popular, with visits to interesting local sites such as Te Waihora and Caton's Bay. Janet is organising a longer excursion to Kaikoura in November, and I'm organising a trip in January up to Pūkorokoro Miranda which will be a first for several of us.

– ANITA SPENCER

OTAGO

This Spring has been incredibly wild so finding optimal conditions has been challenging. For many bird species, these stronger southerly spring storms (linked Antarctic warming) coincide with nesting, adding another challenge to native species already up against so much from humans. The Global Big Day on 11/10 saw Dunedin members support the newly formed Otago University Birding Society with a trip to Aramoana where a diverse range of species were recorded. Records of interest: first Shining Cuckoo recorded at Tautuku on 13/9; a pair of Ōtepoti Weka appeared with a chick; 1 Australasian Little Grebe at Glenorchy; 1 Australasian Bittern at Sinclair wetlands; Kōtuku at Andersons Bay and Glenorchy; Wrybill at Warrington; and Red Knot at Aramoana. Kākā continued in unexpected locations from Lake Hayes to Milton. A Chukar was at Isthmus Peak and SI Fernbird in the Matukituki Valley. An impressive flock of 210 Yellowhammers was recorded near Arrowtown while a Mohua translocation from Anchor Island saw 50 individuals released in the East Branch Matukituki.

This is the first spring since 2016 that members have not taken part in the much-enjoyed Robins Beyond Orokonui, Kākāruai SI Robin nest success monitoring, the project having been completed thanks to the dedicated organisation of local member George Pickerell. Other projects are underway include a Spotted Shag breeding census initiated this season with 13 volunteers involved to date surveying cliffs from Bobbys Head to Nugget Point. The Otago Regional Council-funded Birds New Zealand wetland bird project continues in collaboration with other community groups. Acoustic monitors have been deployed at a range of sites covering wetlands in Central, East and South Otago. We have supported the Matuku Muster with October and November surveys in Central Lakes and Catlins. The Catlins October counts recorded 1 bittern and 2 Marsh Crakes. The Otago Harbour Survey is underway again with monthly counts initiated in September with local members being assigned different sections. Meanwhile, the team continue to plan for the 2026 annual conference in Wānaka with a range of interesting field trips proposed.

Upcoming: Otago Harbour Bird Survey, 16/11 & 21/12. Contact Bruce: brucejmckinlay@gmail.com; Spotted Shag Census of coastal Otago nest sites. Contact Martine: darma1@me.com; Branch meetings at 7:30pm on 4th Tues each month. Benham Seminar Room, 2nd Floor Zoology Dept, 340 Great King St. Birds Otago Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/groups/birdsotago/

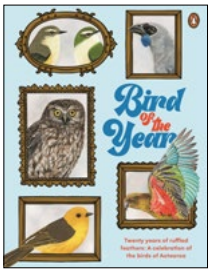
– FRANCESCA CUNNINGHAME

SOUTHLAND

Pete McClelland reported a Reef Heron at Curio Bay in the Catlins on 23/7, a species that used to be seen frequently around the Southland coast but is now a very rare sighting. Bradley Shields confirmed a Cirl Bunting (which had flown into a window) in Gore on 4/9, the first record of this species in Southland that we are aware of. Our resident Terek and Curlew sandpipers are still being seen at Awarua as of 19/9, according to Sean Jaques. They were joined by an Eastern Curlew on 3/10 according to Bradley Shields. While 1 or 2 curlews are seen at the Invercargill Estuary each year (2 this year), it is unusual to see 1 at Awarua. The curlew that was seen at Haldane Estuary for around 10 years has not been seen for the last 3 years, yet another sign of our declining wader numbers. On 18/10, Maddie Van De Wetering saw 4 Bar-tailed Godwits in a paddock near Te Anau and 6 were reported near the Upukeroa River mouth on 27/10. On 22/10, Sean Jacques recorded 4 Arctic Terns (2 adults, 2 immatures) at the White-fronted Tern roost at near Stirling Point, Bluff stopping off there during their epic trans-polar migration! *– PETE McCLELLAND*

All our regional newsletters are online here: https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/resources/regional-newsletters/

Reviews



Bird of the Year
Ellen Rykers
Penguin
RRP $45

During this book's launch, Forest & Bird Chief Executive Nicola Toki made the point that it's better to engage with people on the plight of our native birds in a positive way and with a healthy sense of humour. Author Ellen Rykers has added to that formula with her superb illustrated history of F&B's Bird of the Year (BOTY) competition, which combines engaging writing with over 160 vibrant works by 17 artists, all in the name of celebrating the native birds of Aotearoa. Former F&B communications manager Lynn Freeman spoke about shepherding the project and how she enlisted Ellen Rykers as the book's author, adding that "she was the perfect person to write this book" having worked on the BOTY while she was a F&B comms team staffer.

The impressive result is a stylish 172 page, 26 x 20cm softback which weighs the same as an adult Whio (900g). It covers the origin and two decade history of the BOTY over 33 pages, including the Pekapeka-Tou-Roa Long-tailed Bat and Pūteketeke Crested Grebe controversies. The next 212 pages contain a series of 81 highly readable bird species texts including interesting ornithological and conservation information such as their conservation status and main threats, and acknowledgements of many of the people who have championed a bird along with often witty BOTY campaign anecdotes. For example, Fiona Powell created a quirky 'Weka Olympics' video in 2016 that went viral during the campaign.

As the F&B communications manager who came up with the idea for the first BOTY in 2005, my take is that it has achieved far more than I could have imagined back then. It has gone global and now attracts tens of thousands of votes each year, which is a good thing for awareness of our native birds and the conservation cause. If you're looking for a book for an aspiring ornithologist, this would be an astute choice.

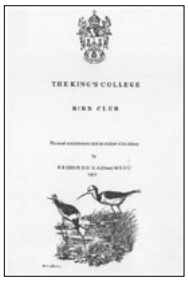
Feathers of Aotearoa
Niels Meyer-Westfield
Potton & Burton
$59.99

The first hollow filaments that evolved about 250 million years ago in pre-avian dinosaurs are thought to have been for insulation, display or communication rather than flight. Since then, a myriad of more complicated feathers have evolved. Written and illustrated by Niels Meyer-Westfield, this distinctive 200 page, 26 x 26cm hardback which weighs in at 1.42kg is a deep dive into the complex modern forms and functions of feathers. Designed in the style of a nature journal and printed on high quality uncoated paper, it brings to life our native birds in an innovative and informative way that deftly combines science with art.

After an introduction describing the author's passion for feathers and nature art, the book's nine chapters cover the history of feathers, their colours and patterns, and the different types of feathers before focusing on the main bird groups with a selection of species from each. The text also covers relevant aspects of avian anatomy, migration, habitats and ecology.

Hundreds of illustrations elegantly evoke the versatile forms of the feathers of the native and endemic birds of Aotearoa, alongside a few introduced and Australian species. Each feather illustration is accurate and informative with the practical value of allowing identification in the wild. The striking field sketches and coloured pencil illustrations reflect careful field observations and the text displays an accumulation of detailed knowledge. The overall impression is of a very attractive book which will provide hours of interest by being both aesthetically pleasing and educational.

MICHAEL SZABO, EDITOR



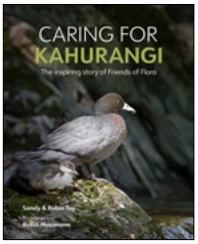
History of the King's College Bird Club
R.B. Sibson

R.B. (Dick) Sibson was a prolific author in *Notornis*, a co-author of the *Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand and outlying islands (1966), author of Birds of Fiji in colour (1972) and Birds at risk*: rare or endangered species of New Zealand (1982), and a long-time editor of *Notornis*. Prior to emigrating here from England in 1939, he studied at Oxford University, graduating with an MA in Classics and a Diploma of Education. At Oxford, he met ornithologists and developed an interest in birdwatching. After graduation he taught at Sandbach grammar school, where he took up birdwatching opportunities, local and overseas. An enthusiastic amateur ornithologist, 'Sib' was a Classics teacher at King's College in Auckland from 1939 until he retired in 1971.

He encouraged and mentored many students through the King's College Bird Club. They undertook many projects and field trips with the OSNZ and the Wildlife Service, including to Pūkorokoro Miranda and numerous offshore islands. Many KCBC student members went on to become well-known ornithologists in their own right, including Barrie Heather as *Notornis* editor and co-author with Hugh Robertson of the *Field Guide to the Birds of New Zealand* (1996).

Sib prepared a history of the KCBC in 1989. Thanks to KCBC alumnus Tim Lovegrove providing the scans, it has now been published on the Birds New Zealand 'Historical Publications' web page here: https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Kings-College-Bird-Club-History-R-B-Sibson-1989.pdf

COLIN MISKELLY, *NOTORNIS* EDITOR



Caring for Kahurangi
Robin & Sandy Toy
Potton & Burton
RRP $59.99

Robin and Sandy Toy will be known to many members as co-authors of *Distribution of great spotted kiwi, 2012–2021* (*Notornis*, 2021, Vol. 68: https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Toy-etal_69_1-18.v3.pdf). Robin Toy also presented on the translocation of Roroa Great Spotted Kiwi at the June 2024 annual conference in Nelson, after which he and Sandy Toy led a field trip to the Flora Saddle area in Kahurangi National Park.

You would have to get up very early in the morning to do everything described in the book that they and their fellow Friends of Flora (FoF) have over the past 25 years. They must have lost count of how many times they have tramped up and down the rugged bush country below the peaks of Wharepapa Mt Arthur to track and locate Roroa, including going underground to retrieve one from its burrow!

The Toys and their fellow FoFers have needed to be as versatile as a Swiss army knife in their energetic efforts to restore the native birds and ecology of this special place, translocating and tracking birds, surveying and monitoring, and trapping introduced predators. In all these respects, their intrepid, ambitious and inspiring nature restoration project has been an innovative trailblazer that would have made Ed Hillary proud.

Across 304 pages and 25 chapters, this 25 x 20cm hardback, which weighs in at 1.7kg, sets out the what, how, when and where of this remarkable project. It is beautifully written, often as a dual person narrative of Robin and Sandy's activities, and comprehensively illustrated with over 170 of Ruedi Mossiman's excellent colour photographs, including many of the birds there such as Roroa, Whio and Kea. The whole FoF project is clearly a labour of love, and it's many achievements recounted in these pages help to prove the point that, "where there's a will there's a way".

MICHAEL SZABO, EDITOR

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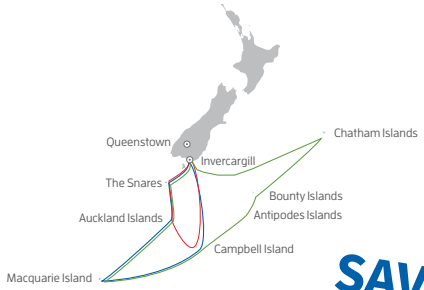

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