



BIRDS

NEW ZEALAND

Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa

MANAWATŪ

Newsletter November 2025

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Australasian Gannet by Chris Tuffley

From the Regional Representative

I need your help to plan the next years' meeting and trips! Please send me your ideas by email kirsten.b.olsen@gmail.com and come to the next meeting with your ideas. It is the last meeting of the year.

Phil Battley will talk about wader identification at the next meeting which can prepare us for the upcoming wader census and the coming season where you can encounter visiting waders from the northern hemisphere.

We are planning a pelagic trip from Petone into Cook Strait Saturday 24 January 2026. We need to find out if there are enough people interested in the trip. We need 20 participants to keep the price to \$120 per person. So far 11 people have said they are interested. Please register your interest to me on kirsten.b.olsen@gmail.com (See later in the newsletter).

Please send me photos and notes about your bird adventures and sightings or other bird news for the next newsletter, on kirsten.b.olsen@gmail.com.

Deadline for the December issue is 25th November 2025.



Nankeen Night Heron by Neill Haggarty

Last meeting

Western Pacific Odyssey by Oscar Thomas.

Review by Stephen Legg

Oscar's Western Pacific Odyssey talk related his recent guiding trip on the Heritage Expeditions ship Adventurer. It was simply tremendous. The audience of twelve was captivated from first to last, with an amazing array of fabulous photos, terse and amusing anecdotes and experiences, and Oscar's impressive detailed knowledge of the multitude of birds he saw on the trip.

The 25-day odyssey started in the Hauraki Gulf, Auckland, New Zealand on 13th March and finished in Osaka, Japan on 6th April. Whilst most of the journey was at sea, there were stops at numerous exotic pacific islands along the way, such as: Norfolk Island (Australia); Ambryn and Espiritu Santo Islands (Vanuatu); Honiara, Guadalcanal and Kolombangara (Solomon Islands); Bougainville, Kavieng and New Ireland (Papua New Guinea); Weno and Chuuk Atoll (Micronesia), and; Tori-shima (Japan).



The Ebird trip report noted 166 checklists and 232 birds, 41 with photos submitted. But these bare numbers merely serve to hide the fact that Oscar showed us 212 superb slides of unusual and exotic birds. Yes -you read it right – 212 slides in an hour! – and many of the slides showed multiple birds!.

The sub-title of the talk was 'Long Tailed Mynas and Short Tailed Albatrosses', but this talk included so many more exotic, funny and strange bird names that I, for one, had heard of few! How about these - just a few: Flying squid; Flying fish (many of all sizes e.g. Black-eyed Smurf, Necromancer, Faultwing, Cranberrywing, Juicy Berrywing and Huckleberry Fin!); Blue Billed White Tern; Metallic Pigeon; Buff Headed Coucal; Pacific Baza: Odedi (Bourgainville Bush Warbler); Micronesian Myzomela: Numerous chooks in Chuuk!; Japanese Murrelet.

We are lucky that Oscar's parents live in Palmerston North. Hopefully he will visit his parents often and diligently and we can persuade him to give us more talks and to join our monthly meetings whenever he visits home.

Regional bird news

By Neill Haggarty

Several reports of Cattle Egrets have been coming in. 5 were seen and photographed in a cow paddock on Kuku Beach Road, one was seen in a paddock on a farm near Balance and 11 were seen from Nukumaruru Road, which is north of Ka Iwi near the Taranaki border.



One Kotuku | White Heron has been seen several times in the Te Hakari Wetland on Kuku Beach Road and one was also seen at Nukumaruru Road.



There have been numerous sightings of Kārearea | New Zealand falcons around Palmerston North city. The best sighting was probably by Cleland Wallace, who saw one predating a bird in a tree in his garden!

The highest wader counts at Foxton Beach / Manawatu River estuary that I am aware of, so far, are 190 Kuaka | Bar-tailed godwits, 15 Huahou | Red knots and 4 Kuriri | Pacific Golden Plovers, although, over the last week, numbers of Knots have seemed to drop off. Paul Gibson recorded first sighting of a Red-necked Stint and on the same day also saw a New Zealand Dotterel.

Cleland Wallace saw a Northern Giant Petrel of the Foxton Beach coast (identified from his photos).

A Kaka has been sighted at the Bason Botanic Gardens in Whanganui.

Australasian Bittern at Pukepuke

Chris Tuffley, Stephen Legg and Kirsten Olsen went to Pukepuke for “The Great Matuku-Hurepo Muster 5 - 6 October 2025. Here is the narrative from the eBird trip report (<https://ebird.org/tripreport/418622>), created from the checklists we submitted during the Muster. It is written by Chris Tuffley.

eBird Checklists were submitted while surveying Pukepuke Lagoon for bittern as part of the nationwide Great Matuku-Hurepo Muster bittern survey. We followed the active coordinated listening protocol, with three stations, located on the western edge of the lake; in a hunting hide on the eastern side of the lake; on the access track to the lake, and; along the northern boundary track. Monitoring was conducted spanning the period from 30 minutes before sunset to 60 minutes after (roughly 19:00 to 20:30) on 5-7 October. Survey data was entered in the Conservation Hub app.

The first night was clear and still, the second windy and cloudy, and on the third night the wind dropped as we arrived to a clear night with light winds and a beautiful full moon, that emerged from clouds along the horizon around 8pm. A bittern was heard at just one of the three stations; Kirsten's on the eastern side of the lagoon. Lucky Kirsten! "I was so busy entering data in the app I almost didn't have time to eat my biscuit...my biscuit nearly went unbitten!" Stephen and Chris weren't at all jealous, no, not at all :). We did at least all get to hear the bittern on a post-survey visit to Kirsten's station on the first night; and we can always come back another night. (Entirely unbidden, Stephen took it upon himself to remind Chris that on the pre-survey recce he and Kirsten had seen two bittern flying over the lagoon - which Chris missed seeing, despite being closest to where they took off, and perhaps even having caused them to take flight. Entirely uncalled for, Stephen!)

All in all, it was a fun three evenings, and all three of us were reluctant to leave our stations when 20:30 rolled around on the third night and the survey came to an end. All going to plan we'll be back again at the November full moon to do it all again!

Grey Warbler by Chris Tuffley.

See the eBird trip report for more photos and sound recordings

<https://ebird.org/tripreport/418622>



Report on the October Big Day trip

by Kirsten Olsen

Neill Haggarty, Stephen Legg and Kirsten Olsen met at Foxton Beach Saturday 11th October at 8:30. It was low tide so the birds were far out. To make it all miserable it began to rain. We counted what we were able to in 10 minutes and headed for Bushy Park.

On the way we stopped at Lake Dudding where we saw New Zealand Dabchick and Little and Back Shags, amongst other birds. We had planned to search for Cattle Egret on Whangaehu Beach Road but instead, we found roadworks before and after the junction in Whangaehu. We sat in a queue of cars for 20 minutes, so decided to drive straight to Bushy Park. The weather also seemed to improve further north.

We had some close encounters with Stitchbird, North Island Robin and Saddleback at Bushy park. Unfortunately, Neill did not have his “bush camera” with him so here are photos from my phone.



We drove to Upokongaro to see if we could see the Nankeen Night Herons there. We were very lucky. They were playing and washing in the stream below the Café. Neill's camera worked very well. We stopped a couple of times along the backroads on the way back to increase our species count. Neill went back to Foxton Beach and got a few more species. Altogether we recorded 52 species on 16 checklists. An eBird trip report can be accessed on: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/419876>.



Birding in Hawkes Bay

Chris Tuffley

Some pictures from a couple of days birding in Hawkes Bay over Labour weekend: gannets, white-fronted terns, red-billed gulls and pipits at Cape Kidnappers, and Wild Turkey chicks at Lake Tūtira. I saw or heard a total of 46 species, with other highlights including hearing Kōkako, Kākā and Robins at Boundary Stream.



We didn't make it to the main gannet colony at Cape Kidnappers, due to unexpectedly high water at Black Reef, even at low tide. Pictures from my last visit, in 2015, show sand reaching almost all of the way to a rock stack that was completely cut off by water this time. I wonder if the beach is getting washed away?



Upcoming meetings

The next Birds New Zealand Manawatū meeting is on **12th November 2025 at 7:15pm in Val Kenward Room at the Palmerston North Community Leisure Centre, 569 Ferguson Street.** The meetings start with a short introduction that includes updates on regional bird sighting and notices. At the end of the meeting there is the opportunity for all to have a cup of tea or coffee and a chat.

Phil Battley: Wader identification.

Phil will prepare us for the upcoming wader census. Come along and learn how to identify and distinguish between waders common and uncommon.

We will also talk about next years programme (meetings and trips). Come with your ideas and wishes.



Red-necked stint. Adult entering breeding plumage. Manawatu River estuary, March 2011. Image © Phil Battley by Phil Battley. Source: New Zealand Birds Online.

Meeting dates for 2026

Second Wednesday of the month: 11th February, 11th March, 8th April, 13th May, 10th June, 8th July, 12 August, 9th September, 14th October, 11th November and 9th December.

Please send me ideas for topics you want covered and email them to me:
kirsten.b.olsen@gmail.com

Upcoming trips and events

Summer/spring Wader count

This year the summer/spring wader count will be Saturday the **22nd November with Sunday the 23rd November** as a back up if the weather plays up. Phil Battley is coordinating the wader count, so if you are interested in taking part, please contact Phil on p.battley@massey.ac.nz .



Pectoral sandpiper. Non-breeding adult wading. Lake Ellesmere, February 2014. Image © Steve Attwood by Steve Attwood. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/steve2/>



Sharp-tailed sandpiper | Kohutapu. Non-breeding adult. Miranda, January 2010. Image © Tony Whitehead by Tony Whitehead. www.wildlight.co.nz

Seabirding on Cook Strait Saturday 24th January 2026

We are organising a pelagic trip from Petone into Cook Strait Saturday 24 January 2026. The boat will leave Petone 7am and be back 1pm. If leaving from Palmerston North the same morning you would have to leave by 5am. The boat is a fishing boat and it will have fish scrap to attract the birds. (Phil Battley uses this boat to take his students on pelagic trips).

The boat costs \$2400 and it takes 20 people, so the cost per person is @120, if we fill the boat. We need you to indicate if you are interested in coming on this fantastic pelagic.

Please email Kirsten Olsen if you are interested in going on this trip:

kirsten.b.olsen@gmail.com



Source: <https://kahunz.co.nz/koken/albums/cook-strait-pelagic-photographic-trip/content/ab13-1/>

Links to other regions' newsletters and other material

Newsletters

Wellington – Sep 2025: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/news/wellington-newsletter/>

Waikato – Sep/Oct 2025: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/news/waikato-newsletter/>

Otago – Sep 2025: <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/news/otago-newsletter/>

Notices

13th Australasian Ornithological Conference (AOC)

BirdLife Australia and Birds New Zealand are excited to announce the **13th Australasian Ornithological Conference (AOC)** will be held in **Perth/Boorloo**.

The AOC will be held from **Tuesday 18 – Thursday 20 November 2025** at the University of Western Australia, with side events planned for the days before and after. The AOC is the primary conference for BirdLife Australia and Birds New Zealand. The largest biennial gathering of amateur and professional ornithologists and avian researchers from Australasia. For more details visit <https://aoc.org.au/>

2026 NZ Bird Conference

The **2026 New Zealand Bird Conference** and 86th Annual General Meeting will be held in Wanaka from 30th May to 1st June during King's Birthday weekend. The event will be hosted at the [Lake Wanaka Centre](#).

Online registration and conference details will be available soon.



2026
WĀNAKA OTAGO
Birds New Zealand Conference

Health and safety

Please, if you have any incident that could have resulted in injury or results in injury while participating in Birds New Zealand activity, report it to the Regional Representative. In Manawatū it is Kirsten Olsen, email birds.manawatu@birdsnz.org.nz or phone 027 354 6010

Health and safety of Birds New Zealand's members when they participate in Birds NZ organised activity, like meetings, collection of data and fieldtrips, is important to the Council. The [Health and Safety Policy](#) can be found on Birds NZ webpage. Press [Here](#) to get to the policy.

To make it more practicable, the Council has developed [health and safety guidelines for field trips](#) that also can be found on the website.

The guidelines state: *"At a health and safety briefing before a field trip commences the trip leader will describe the route, any specific or potential physical difficulties that might be encountered, and the approximate times for lunch, tea breaks and the end of the trip."* (...)

"If a member has an allergy or medical condition, they should bring their own anti-histamines and personal medications. The trip leader should be advised of medical problems a member has and how to deal with them. Bring a mobile phone and share phone numbers with others. Don't hesitate to call 111 for any incidents involving injury." (...) *"The trip leader should check the weather forecast for the day and, if necessary, monitor the weather conditions during the trip. Turn back if the weather deteriorates. Each member should bring sufficient food and drinking water for their personal needs."*

Photo by Chris Tuffley



Contribution to future Birds NZ Manawatu newsletters

Please send photos and text that would be appropriate for this newsletter, to Kirsten Olsen kirsten.b.olsen@gmail.com .

Deadline for December 2025 issue: 25 November 2025

Please send your contributions to: kirsten.b.olsen@gmail.com

Contacts in Birds New Zealand Manawatū Branch:

Regional representative: Kirsten Olsen

email: birds.manawatu@birdsnz.org.nz

Regional recorder: Neill Haggarty

email: iolaandneill@inspire.net.nz

Please report interesting bird sightings to Neill

Wader count coordinator: Phil Battley

email: p.battley@massey.ac.nz

BIRDS | SCIENCE | PEOPLE



Royal Spoonbill: Michael Szabo

Our 2024 Royal Spoonbill nationwide census recorded 4,593 spoonbills, nearly double the count in the 2012 census.

You can join Birds New Zealand for just \$1.75 a week.
That's \$90 a year, and just \$45 for students.

www.birdsnz.org.nz

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