

THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND (Inc)

Wellington Region Newsletter

OSNZ—Birds New Zealand

March 2017

<http://osnz.org.nz/> and <http://notornis.osnz.org.nz/>

Greetings

The summer of 2016/17 will not be noted as one of our best but in marked contrast it has been a great year for rare and unusual birds in New Zealand. Colin Miskelly gave a summary of the top seven rarities at the February meeting and their details are included in the newsletter. Given the success of the 2016 Cook Strait pelagic trip we have planned another two for this year. This is an opportunity to see up close a range of seabirds and even do a bit of fishing. In April Forest and Bird are translocating fernbird to the Pauatahanui Reserve. Later in the year there will be an opportunity for members to participate in monitoring them. There will also be further opportunities later in the year to help MIRO with monitoring banded dotterels at Eastbourne and the Pencarrow Lakes.

Thank you to all those who have supplied content for the newsletter. I am most appreciative of contributions for the newsletter and the only limitation for submitting content is that they have some ornithological connection. Suggestions for talks at our monthly meeting will be gratefully received. I still have not finalised the “out of town” speaker for 2017.

Regards

Geoff de Lisle, Wellington Regional Representative, Birds New Zealand (OSNZ)

Upcoming Monthly Meetings

WHERE and WHEN

Meetings are held at Te Papa’s collections building, 169 Tory Street. Go up the steps/ramp and across the carpark.

First Monday of the month, 7.45pm.

April Monday 3rd

Backyard-Bird Observations. At this meeting members will report of what birds they have observed in their backyards. The meeting will include a discussion on ways to record backyard-bird observations and how to lodge them on eBird.

May Monday 8th Megan Jolly, a Veterinary Resident at Wildbase, Massey University will speak on takahe.

June – there will not be a meeting in June as the Annual Birds New Zealand Conference is being held over Queen’s Birthday weekend.

Report of Monthly Meetings

February Monday 6th – Member’s meeting.

Colin Miskelly, summarized 7 recent sightings which has made the summer of 2016/17 a bumper season for unusual / rare birds in New Zealand. I have attached links to BirdingNZ.net for these birds. This website is devoted to sharing information on birdwatching and wild birds in New Zealand <http://www.birdingnz.net/>. Rare bird sightings are posted on this website but before the authenticity of the sightings is assessed by the Birds New Zealand, Records Appraisal Committee.

Cox’s sandpiper, <http://www.birdingnz.net/forum/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=6454>. **Lake Ellsmere** <http://www.birdingnz.net/>

Cox's Sandpiper ("*Calidris*" × *paramelanotos*) is the name given to shorebirds which are hybrids between male **Pectoral** and female **Curlew Sandpipers**. Most if not all birds found to date are males, in accord with [Haldane's rule](#).

Haldane's rule is an observation about the early stage of speciation, formulated in 1922 by the British evolutionary biologist J.B.S. Haldane, which states that if in a species hybrid only one sex is inviable or sterile, that sex is more likely to be the heterogametic sex. The heterogametic sex is the one with two different sex chromosomes; in birds this is the female. It would appear that female hybrid offspring from pectoral x curlew sandpiper crosses are not viable.

Laughing Gull <http://www.birdingnz.net/forum/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=6346> Te Ahiaua Reserve near Opotiki. This sighting has been accepted by the Records Appraisal Committee and it is a new bird for New Zealand.

Red-footed booby <http://www.birdingnz.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=6449> Muriwai gannet colony. The first New Zealand record was in March 2016 with a sighting on Herald Islets, Kermadec Islands. Ten months later a bird was seen at the Murawai gannet colony.

Wilson's phalarope <http://www.birdingnz.net/forum/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=6248> Ahuriri, Napier
<http://www.birdingnz.net/forum/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=6645> near Wairoa now.

Black kite <http://www.birdingnz.net/forum/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=6210> Meremere. There has been a black kite at Renwick, Blenheim for many years.

Eastern rockhopper penguin <http://www.birdingnz.net/forum/viewtopic.php?f=9&t=6510> Cape Palliser, Wairarapa. Older records of rockhopper penguins do not differentiate between the three species that are currently recognised.

Asiatic dowitcher - <http://www.birdingnz.net/forum/viewtopic.php?t=6353> Motueka spit. A rare visitor to New Zealand usually seen with godwits.

Ian & Gwyneth Armitage- Norfolk Island Bird Week. They summarised their trip in November 2016 to Norfolk Island. The island group is a breeding site for several 100,000 seabirds including the masked booby, grey ternlet, white tern, sooty tern, & wedge-tailed shearwater. Phillip Island supports one of the largest breeding populations of red-tailed tropic birds in Australia. One of the most notable birds in Norfolk Island is the endemic green parakeet. Bird Week is an annual event which Ian highly recommends - <https://www.norfolkislandtravelcentre.com/events/norfolk-island-bird-week>. Note: There is an article with pictures by Ian and Gwyneth Armitage on their trip in the March Issue of the Birds New Zealand magazine.

George Hobson – Wellington Big Day

A Wellington Big day, Dec 17, 2016.

George Hobson » Tue Dec 20, 2016

So the day started at 5.00 am, getting breakfast [of sorts], dressed and finding my, mostly charged, camera. At 5.20 out of the house it was, down to the Island Bay coast, where nothing was showing, until a fishing boat arrived with a **Salvin's Albatross** following it in! Very nice addition to the list, followed by a **Reef Heron** flying off the rocks and a single **Fluttering Shearwater** (the only one of the day!).

From there it's straight to ZEALANDIA, at about 7.30 I was in there, picking up all the crucial bush birds (saddleback, stichbird etc, you know the like), as soon as I stepped in a **paradise shelduck** flew over, **kaka** called, and a **pied shag** swum in nearby - all good new birds adding to the day list. The first time walking through the inner sanctuary, birds such as the **Takahe**, **Brown Teal**, **California Quail** were a no show, so I decided to walk up quite a considerable

hill to try to pick up those species. No luck, but walking back through I picked up all the previously mentioned species!

Straight from ZEALANDIA to Keith George Memorial Park, to pick up **Whitehead**, a species I missed at ZEALANDIA, 5 min in a flock of 6 popped up – it's fantastic to see them flourishing in a park just off SH2. It's easy to access, and totally worth it to pop in for a visit with a good number of whiteheads and apparently, tomtits (although I missed them) and great looking bush.

From Keith George, over the hill to Pauatahanui in Porirua it was, to pick up such birds as **Grey Teal**, **Pied Stilt**, **Song Thrush** and others – nothing very exciting though, just to make up the numbers 😊

At the Plimmerton Fire Station right after that there were no terns at all, unfortunately so up to Waikanae it was.

At Waikanae it was a quick stop to the Waimanu lagoons, to pick up **Little Black Shag**, a species which was only seen once on the day, Canada Goose, and lots of little brown things. I expected I'd need to come back in the evening for low tide, so after about 30min it was straight up to Pharazyn reserve.

At Pharazyn I picked up Feral Goose (surprisingly not at Waikanae 🤪), **NZ Dabchick, Pheasant** and others that were around. From Pharazyn it was to Peka Peka Beach, where I got Pukeko (I know! Only just getting pukeko) and Skylark.



Hopping back in the car it was time for Otaki Sewage Ponds, where I picked up absolutely nothing! Which was slightly depressing as I was almost certain I'd get Black-fronted Dotterel – so down to the Otaki Estuary where I got many **Skylarks**, which sound lovely but not getting me up the numbers I need. Finally, a male **Banded Dotterel** popped up singing on a little rock, a new bird *whew*.

After that I quickly headed over to the Waitohu Estuary where apparently Barbary dove are present though there were none that day.

After dipping on Barbary dove, a panicked visit back to the Otaki Sewage Ponds to try desperately to pick up **Black-fronted Dotts** was necessary. After looking around with binos for about 15min I heard a rustling at my feet, looked down and just there, on the other side of the fence was a BFD!

After that small victory, back to Waikanae it was, with a quick check around the lagoons (no luck 😞😞) I headed out onto the beachy bit, where after about 15min I located a sole **Caspian Tern**, a new species, pushing me ever closer to that target of over 60.

Keeping on walking there wasn't much really until I turned around, saw some large white birds flying, fist pumped and yelled "**SPOONBILL!**": a new species!

Driving back up to SH1 and down again to cross the river (it takes a little while), it was straight to the Takahe Drive pond, where I picked up **coot**, about 7 of them, which I dipped on at Pharazyn. This next spot was probably my most anticipated, the Otaihangā Boardwalk, a fantastic spot for Fernbird. Heading off to start the walk it was about 6.00, and arriving bang on time paid off – **4 Fernbirds!** 2 birds popped just after the bridge, and were closely followed by another pair a bit further back. Such cute birds!

Arriving home at 7.40ish, I tallied up my final score, 64! The new Wellington big day record! 😄 However, there were a couple of major dips on the day, i.e. Kingfisher! So there is a possibility of a higher total than that, next year!

Acknowledgement: George's father, the driver for the Wellington Big Day.

Photograph, George Hobson taken during his Wellington Big Day.

This article was first published on BirdingNZ.net and reproduced with the permission of George Hobson.

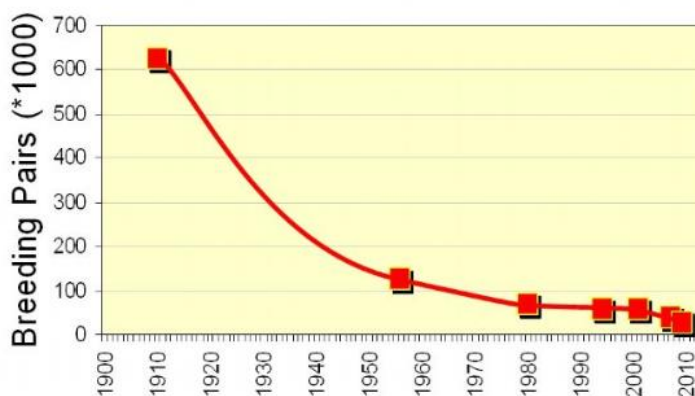
Dallas Bishop & Geoff de Lisle. Presented the slide show made by Heritage Expeditions staff on the recent trip to the sub-Antarctic Islands, December/January 2017.

March Monday 6th. Michelle Bradshaw (DOC) & Malcom Shaw

Are Pinging Penguins Promising? (Acoustic Telemetry of African Penguins)

The African penguin (Jackass) numbers have significantly declined over the last century with a 60% decline in the last decade. The causes for the decline include habitat degradation, commercial guano collection, egg collecting and at-sea factors such as reduced availability of food and oiling. In her talk Michelle described a project to use acoustic pingers to track penguins at sea.

This technology was currently being used for other species such as white sharks. Her study showed that the acoustic signal did not affect the penguins or alert their predators to their presence. The acoustic tags had to be fitted on the chest of the bird as tracking was not effective when the tags were placed on their backs. The tracking technology was shown to be effective on three, free-living birds and offers another method for tracking penguins at sea. http://www.rufford.org/rsg/projects/michelle_bradshaw



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Regional Recorder: Nikki McArthur nikki.mcarthur.101@gmail.com

Birds New Zealand Regional Roundup: Geoff de Lisle & Dallas Bishop (04) 527 0929 osnzwelly@gmail.com

Shag Survey - Geoff de Lisle

Mist netting – Matu Booth, manager@ngamanu.co.nz

Cook Strait Pelagic Trips

The 2016 trip was highly successful with a great range of seabirds seen, including a good variety of albatross and mollymawk species.

Michael Szabo and I are organising another Cook Strait pelagic trip on Saturday 13th May on "Seafarer II", a 50 foot charter vessel based at Seaview marina. The trip will leave at 7.00am for a 6 hour adventure. This trip has been over subscribed and a further trip has been scheduled for Sunday 18th of June. If you are interested in joining the second trip please let me know – Geoff de Lisle osnzwelly@gmail.com

The boat is licenced to take up to 20 people and offers an excellent opportunity to photograph albatrosses and other seabird species at close range. If we have 20 people the trip will cost \$75/person. However, if only 10 people want to join the trip it will cost \$150 each (includes barbecue lunch, tea/coffee/orange juice and snacks/fruit). The trip will only run if there is a minimum of 10 people. Details about the boat can be found here: <http://www.cookstraitfishingcharters.co.nz/?sn=9&st=1>

Guided Trips to Mana Island with FOMI



FOMI have organized a series of trips to Mana Island for both members and non-members. Details of the trips, including dates can be found on their website <http://www.manaisland.org.nz/visitors-2/>

“ Trips can be guided or non-guided. There is a brochure for non-guided trips which describes the major features of the island. Mana Island is an excellent example of a restoration project in which an island farm is being transformed to its original state.

Over the summer and autumn months Friends of Mana Island runs guided trips to Mana Island. These depart from Mana Marina, Porirua.

The cost is \$50 per person for members of Friends of Mana Island, and \$60 for non-members.

A trained guide will take you around the island and provide information about the many highlights. This includes historical information as well as details about the restoration projects, current activities and wildlife. From the island there are great views of the South Island, Kapiti Island and the North Island. We will stop for lunch along the way.”



Parrot Dog – is a craft brewery in Wellington. Rarebird was a series from Parrot Dog of one-off beers inspired by “the quirky birds of Aotearoa”.

East Harbour Banded Dotterels

Parker Jones, MIRO

The birds have now all left the Lakes Block and Eastbourne foreshores.

First, on behalf of MIRO, a big thank you to those who helped with the monitoring with a special thanks to George Hobson who monitored the Eastbourne Foreshore every week, to Darren Lees who spends many hours of his own time trapping pests around the nesting area at the Lakes Block, to the MIRO volunteer Lake Trappers and to Pasi Hyvonen who developed our nest monitoring application.

We had 4 nests, 3 successful, on the Eastbourne Foreshore, and we found 9 nests, 5 successful, at the Lakes Block. There were more nests that we did not find at the Lakes Block, but we did monitor the chicks from those nests until they fledged. We had 38 monitoring trips over this season and now know better how to find the nests and how to monitor.



Juvenile banded dotterel

Some (from my non-scientific point of view) interesting observations including:-

- the birds at the Lakes Block arrived in 23rd September, the birds arrived at the Eastbourne Foreshore 2 weeks later



- the birds at the Eastbourne Foreshore left 5 February, the birds left the Lakes Block 20 February
- most successful nests hatched 3 chicks, but in most cases only 1 made it to fledging
- the birds seem to stay within 150 metres of their nesting sites while the chicks fledged
- the females seemed to leave the area once the chicks were 2-3 weeks old, with the males sticking around for another 2-3 weeks.
- the males took off and left the fledglings, who then took off a few days after the males. The fledglings were very upset when the males left.

There was an issue with the bands not being the correct size we hope to solve for the 2017/2018 breeding season so we can track where they go, if they come back to the same place etc.

I am organising a debrief session with the stakeholders (GWRC, DoC, Taranaki Whanui, Lower Hutt City, OSNZ) to go through lessons learned, what we can do better etc for late March/April at the Taranaki Whanui downtown Wellington premises.

OSNZ (Birds NZ) members who wish to help with this MIRO project should contact, Geoff de Lisle
osnzwelly@gmail.com

Bird Snippets

Interesting Seawatch of Wainuiomata

Michael » Thu Jan 19, 2017

As I am down with George at the moment, we decided to go after one of my last North Island breeding land birds I have not seen - the Cirl Bunting. A small population was present at Wainuiomata, though I am not sure how recently any have been seen. On George and I's two attempts in the past few months we have dipped and George has tried a few times in between with no luck.

But, on all our visits to the Wainuiomata Coast, we get a glut of seabirds! This time was particularly epic as we each got a lifer, one of which is quite uncommon in Cook Strait according to ebird - 7 Cook's Petrel! We had a constant trickle of small, elegant Pterodroma, pale with a distinct 'm' on the wings. They were not traveling as a solid group, but odd birds moved down the coast constantly. The other highlight was a Westland Petrel (lifer for me) - easily identified for myself as I recently had Black Petrels and this bird was notably bigger but with a similar giss. We also had 3 confirmed White-Capped Albatross, one mollymawk sp. which I couldn't confirm, and one which appeared to me to have the ring of one of the great albatross species.

Fluttering Shearwater abounded, and George had one unidentified, all dark shearwater a fair way out. It was too distant to get much giss features to give a species. There were also 6 White-Fronted Tern and two Gannet. Surprisingly, despite the abundance of tube-noses, the only shag was a little, despite the coast being known for Spotted Shag.

Discussion as to whether the 'Westland petrel' was actually a white-chinned petrel.

BirdingNZ.net

Fairy Prion, Te Moana Rd, Waikanae

GrahamB » Fri Jan 27, 2017

On way to the beach for lunchtime walk, I noticed an unusual grey & white bird corpse in the gutter near the dairy along Te Moana Rd. Turned around and picked it up - a fairly fresh Fairy Prion (bit of a whiff though - probably from last weekend's big blow). BirdingNZ.net

The only other 'wreck' bird I've seen after the storm was the Common Diving petrel at Peka, and a Black-backed Gull on Waikanae estuary spit this afternoon. Plenty of WF Terns today again and a few Caspians - a hellish NW blowing and most were sheltering behind the abundant

wood drift. No buoy barnacles but significant stranding of small bluebottles (Physalia) almost all about 1-2 cm.

Migrating spoonbills, Cook Strait

Colin Miskelly » Sun Jan 29, 2017

Seen from Wellington to Picton ferry on morning of 27 Jan, south of Cape Terawhiti. Flock of 7 royal spoonbills about 100 m asl flying north into 25 knot northerly, on a trajectory that would take them up the Wellington west coast.

The only other bird of note was a pomarine skua off the Wellington south coast. BirdingNZ.net

Bill Cash » Mon Jan 30, 2017

On two occasions I have recorded Royal Spoonbills in the Outer Queen Charlotte Sound and looked to be heading across Cook Strait.

Once while on Long Island one evening I saw a small flock of about five Royal Spoonbills flying between Long Island and Arapawa Island heading north.

The second occasion three or more birds were sighted roosting on White Rocks one evening.

Small Wader Waikanae Estuary

Jim_j » Tue Jan 24, 2017

I spotted a small wader with a couple of banded dots on Sunday at Waikanae Estuary (the Paraparumu side).

I had assumed it was a Banded Dott but as I got a bit closer noticed it was slightly bigger with reddish legs. Sorry not much help I know, had no pen or paper with me and not very good with me waders.....BirdingNZ.net

Possible turnstone?

Peafowl, south of Otaki

SomesBirder » Thu Feb 23, 2017

Whilst driving between Otaki and Waikanae today, I was surprised to see a single male peafowl in a field. The conditions on the road meant that stopping to take photographs was not possible at the time. I haven't heard of the species breeding here, so would it have been an escapee. BirdingNZ.net

GrahamB » Fri Feb 24, 2017

I've seen them, to the west, on the approaches to Te Horo from the south several times over the years. It is possible that they are feral but they might belong to a farm or life-style block nearby - it is the land of life-style blocks between Peka Peka and Te Horo. BirdingNZ.net

rogerandmavis » Sun Feb 26, 2017

I've seen them often in the fields by the road there. I'm pretty certain they are descendants of the peafowl that lived at Marycrest Convent there a few years ago. BirdingNZ.net

Coot Pharazyn Reserve

Murray Williams Feb 21, 2017

Murray reports that this is the first Coot he has seen at the reserve. Note, there are no eBird records of Coot at the reserve but a number from the wetlands round Waikanae.

Falcon Crofton Downs

ledzep » Sun Feb 26, 2017

Distant views of a Falcon calling and circling high between Tinakori Hill and Ngaio above Trelisick Park. Circling high and calling a lot. Viewing from the garden centre at Crofton Downs Mitre 10. Seen it from this area before; good to see they are still around. BirdingNZ.net

Common tern Otaki

igor » Sun Feb 26, 2017

Have just seen a common tern roosting with several hundred white-fronted at Otaki River mouth. Will post more details later.

igor » Sun Feb 26, 2017

A couple of record shots below. The tern stood out pretty well for the white-fronts, being considerably darker grey on the upper-parts, grey primaries and smaller and slimmer size. Looks like it's coming into breeding plumage with pretty uniform grey upper-parts and a hint of grey on the chest and belly. Still needs the rest of the cap, but little black feathers were visible coming through all the way down to the bill BirdingNZ.net



Photograph, Igor Debski

Reef Heron Wellington harbour

ledzep » Tue Feb 28, 2017

I watched a Reef Heron flying south past the Queens Wharf area; then do a sharp 180 and fly back and looked to go somewhere underneath the wharves near where the Police launch resides. Not too far away from the Bluebridge ferry terminal. I don't see it very often but I have seen it before in the same area, and it looks like it may roost underneath the wharves. Not sure if kayak's are allowed in that area, otherwise could be interesting to hire one and go for a paddle beneath the piers. BirdingNZ.net

Peter Hodge » Sun Mar 05, 2017

Several weeks ago I saw two Reef Heron at Island Bay - on the eastern side of the bay, on rocks by the snorkel trail - then a week or so later, another sighting, again in the same place. BirdingNZ.net

Seabird sightings, Miramar peninsula, Wellington

Peter Hodge » Sun Mar 05, 2017 7:09 pm

Seen offshore at Scorching Bay on Friday evening, a spectacular sight: large numbers of White-fronted Terns, approximately 700-800, fishing in several large groups out in the channel and closer to shore, accompanied by Fluttering Shearwaters (approx. 200). Also a White-capped Mollymawk, and two Arctic Skuas. The skuas were flying just offshore, harassing White-fronted Terns which were returning to rocks at Scorching Bay.



Black shags, Hutt River, Upper Hutt

Geoff de Lisle, Mar 14, 2017

A group of 5 black shags roosting on the river bed just downstream from the Totara Park bridge.

Fernbird Translocation to Pauatahanui Inlet

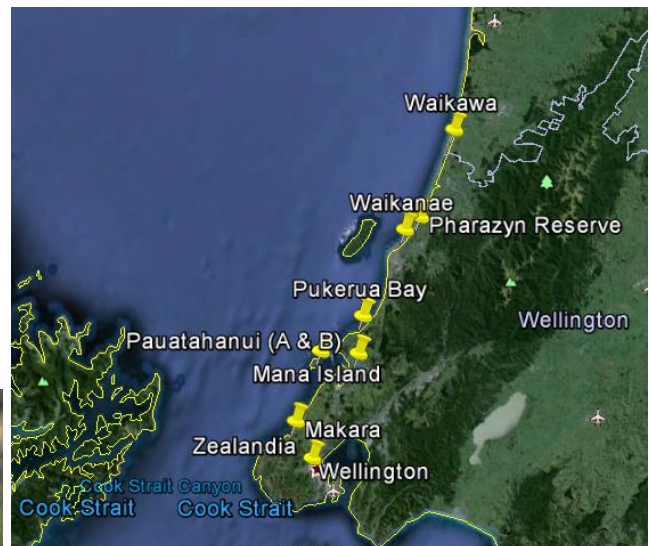
Forest and Bird are translocating fernbird to Pauatahanui Inlet Reserve starting in April. They have consent to transfer up to 25 birds from Lake Rotokare, Taranaki to Pauatahanui. The transfer of fernbirds is being managed by Kevin Parker who is a specialist in bird translocation and has significant experience working with fernbird. One of the conditions for the approval is that the birds are monitored for at least a year after the transfer. Forest and Bird have asked Wellington Birds New Zealand to help with the monitoring. A monitoring plan will be established in conjunction with Kevin Parker. It is likely systematic monitoring will be delayed until after the birds have become established in their new home and established territories. I will be asking for volunteers to help with monitoring once the plan has been established. If the transfer is successful Friends of Mana Island are planning to transfer fernbirds to Mana Island in 2018.



Lake Rotokare, Taranaki, Dallas Bishop

New colony of nesting pied shags – outlet to Lake Kohangatera (Pencarrow Lakes)

After carrying out a survey of the banded dotterels at Pencarrow, Dallas Bishop, Geoff de Lisle and Parker Jones on 30th January 2017 discovered a nesting colony of pied shags at the outlet to Lake Kohangatera. A total of five nests were observed. While the contents of the nests were not observed there appeared to be no hatched chicks indicating that the colony has only recently established. On the 5th of February a pied shag was observed collecting nest material. Subsequent visits to the colony by Ian Armitage revealed that on 6th of March chicks were present in three of the nests. One nest had 2 chicks and the other two nests one each. The birds are nesting on *Coprosma propinqua* which is in contrast to most other colonies in New Zealand where pied shags normally nest in trees. In the Wellington region pied shags nest in either macrocarpa or pine trees. However, there is a report from Blackburn (1962) of a colony of pied shags in French Pass where they were nesting in low shrubs, principally on *Muhlenbeckia complexa*.



Location of pied shag colonies

The new colony marks a continuing spread of pied shags in the Wellington region. The first colony was established in Makara in 1996. From 2007 to 2015 seven new colonies were established as shown in the map. In a recent survey of pied shags in the Wellington region the maximum number of nests recorded in any month ranged from 3 to 37 (mean 16). Pied shags breed all year with peak breeding between October and March.



Right, picture of the channel to Lake Kohangatera. The nesting colony is in the foreground by the shore. Reference. Blackburn A (1962) Pied shags nesting in low shrubs. *Notornis* 10:93.



Te Papa Blogs

The global hunt for the original wandering albatross

10 March 2017 [Alan Tennyson](#)
Vertebrate Curator Alan Tennyson explores the history of the name of the wandering albatross and the hunt for the original specimens.

<http://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2017/03/10/the-global-hunt-for-the-original-wandering-albatross/>

A new bird for New Zealand – laughing gull

7 March 2017 [Colin Miskelly](#)
Christmas arrived two days early for Waikato bird-watchers Annette Taylor and David Riddell when they spotted New Zealand's first laughing gull.
<http://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2017/03/07/a-new-bird-for-new-zealand-laughing-gull/>

11,000 images on New Zealand Birds Online – and the Brooks family's Big Year

24 February 2017 [Colin Miskelly](#)
The 11,000th image loaded on New Zealand Birds Online was of a rare vagrant Australian duck, and it

comes with an inspirational back-story of family-based discovery and adventure.

<http://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2017/02/24/11000-images-on-new-zealand-birds-online-and-the-brooks-familys-big-year/>

DNA reveals relationships of the extinct Scarlett's shearwater Posted 31 January 2017 [Lara Shepherd](#)
Research scientist Lara Shepherd and vertebrate curator Alan Tennyson look at the relationships of extinct seabird, the Scarlett's shearwater (*Puffinus speleus*) in a newly published paper
<http://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2017/01/31/dna-reveals-relationships-of-the-extinct-scarletts-shearwater/>

Sunshine, fishing – and changes in Coromandel birdlife over 45 years

13 January 2017 by [Colin Miskelly](#)
From welcome swallows to Australian magpies, bird expert Colin Miskelly looks at the variety of birdlife who've come to call Coromandel home over the past half-century.
<http://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2017/01/13/sunshine-fishing-and-changes-in-coromandel-birdlife-over-45-years/>

Zealandia Rifleman Translocation Update

Thursday, February 23, 2017

“We have just learned that the titipounamu / rifleman population in the Wainuiomata source site (the Wainuiomata / Orongorongo Key Native Ecosystem area) considerably lower than previously thought and, as a consequence, we have taken the difficult decision to postpone the translocation into ZEALANDIA scheduled for March.

Greater Wellington Regional Council monitors the populations of titipounamu every year, and the latest data sadly shows a decline of New Zealand’s smallest bush bird in the Wainuiomata site. It is expected this is happening due to high rat numbers which occur when trees have an exceptionally high seeding season (otherwise known as a ‘mast’), of which we have had several in recent years. The worrying trend of more frequent mast events is happening nationwide, possibly linked to climate change.”

Our colleagues in Greater Wellington Regional Council manage significant predator control operations in the Wainuiomata site, however, the recent data shows just how vulnerable our native species are to predation, and the importance of our national Predator-Free 2050 goal. In the meantime, predator free areas such as ZEALANDIA have a critical role to play in conservation and the management of populations at a national level.

Naturally, we are all very disappointed that titipounamu will not be coming to ZEALANDIA this year, but conservation of species is our first and foremost concern and this is definitely the right decision in the light of the most up-to-date data. It also highlights the extent to which conservation is not a short-term endeavour, as if any of us thought that!

Over the next year we will be working with all our partners to identify possible alternative places where titipounamu are thriving for a possible translocation, as well as other opportunities for new species introductions to ZEALANDIA and Otari Wilton’s Bush. We will also continue to play an active role in discussions regarding the management of our threatened native species.

The full report can be found at <http://www.visitzealandia.com/Whats-On/ArtMID/1150/ArticleID/29/Rifleman-Update>

Avian Pox in a pipit on Kapiti Island

The attached photograph was taken on the 3rd of March, 2017 in front of the visitor’s centre at Rangatira, Kapiti Island. The pipit has a pox-like lesion on its left leg. Nick Fisentzidis, DOC Kapiti Island, reported that this bird was observed with the lesion last year but has not shown any adverse signs from the infection. Avian pox has been recorded on a number of different introduced and native birds in New Zealand. Interestingly, the first case of avian pox in wild-



living birds in New Zealand was in a pipit (Westerskov, 1953). Westerskov observed a pipit by the highway, near the Tongariro Trout hatchery at Turangi. This bird had lesions on its leg and face but “did not look really sick”. However, the bird was shot for closer examination but “unfortunately the bird was somewhat damaged by the shot”. Samples from this case were sent to Wallaceville Animal Research Station and the diagnosis was confirmed

based on the histological findings. In 1953 pox infections had been recorded in poultry in the North Island but not the South Island.

Quinn (1971) document multiple cases of pox-like lesions in pipits at the base of the Matahina hydro dam, at Te Mahoe.

References

Quinn, PJ. (1971) Suspected case of bird pox in a small population of New Zealand pipits. *Notornis* 18:217.

Westerskov, KE. (1953) Bird pox in a New Zealand pipit. *Notornis* 5:168-170.

Long-tailed cuckoo – Kapiti Island

While volunteering on Kapiti 24/2/2017 we heard at 10.38am near a hihi feeder (49) just off the Trig track, a group of at least 3 long-tailed cuckoo loudly calling. Cuckoo were heard on each of the five days during this visit (22-27 February). This was in marked contrast to our subsequent visit (8-14/3/2017) just 10 days later. During this visit long-tailed cuckoo were only heard once – a single bird was heard on the 10th of March at 8.00am at Rangatira.

Leon Berard (DOC) last heard a long-tailed cuckoo on Kapiti Island on the 23/3/2017 at Wharekohu.

The last seasonal records of long-tailed cuckoo recorded from Mrs Wilkinson’s Kapiti dairy (1928-42) ranged from February 28 to March 31. The latter dates were young birds.

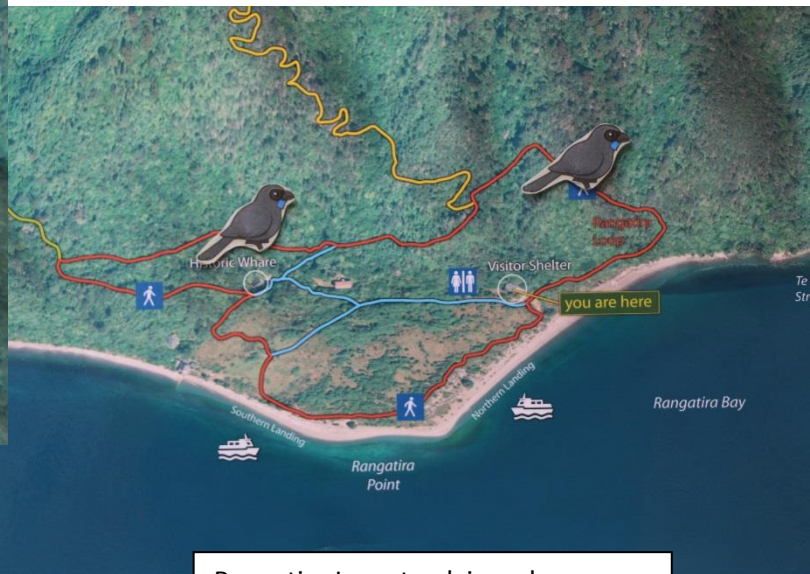
Wilkinson AK (1957) Kapiti Diary

Dallas Bishop & Geoff de Lisle

Kapiti Island Kokako



One of the joys of visiting Kapiti Island is hearing and seeing kokako. They are now regularly seen / heard on the two main tracks at the centre of the island at Rangatira. There is a map at the visitors’ centre at Rangatira showing where kokako have recently been seen. Currently birds are seen not only in the tawa forests on the upper part of the tracks but also in the



lower reaches, not far from the visitors’ centre. On 24th February 2017 2 adult kokako were seen feeding a fledged juvenile on the Wilkinson Track in the tawa forest not far from the junction. The juvenile was calling

Rangatira Loop track in red

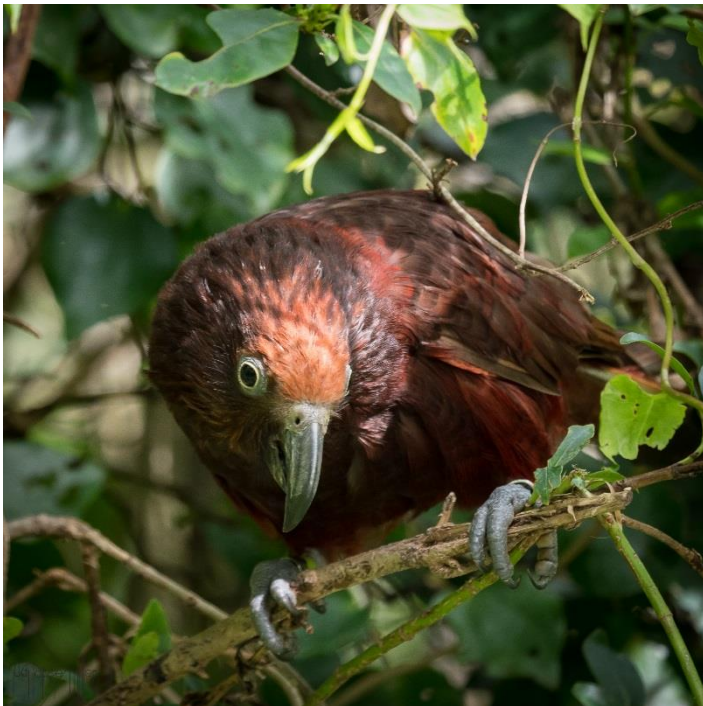
repeatedly with an unmusical call, not like any known adult calls. Dave Banks, guide for Kapiti Explorer reported seeing two adults and two juveniles on the northern branch of the Rangatira loop track, near the Visitors' centre. This group of birds was seen again on the 12th of March in the same area and was notable for the juveniles calling as previously recorded (with the other family group in February).

While the number of kokako on Kapiti Island is unknown there are indications that the population is increasing. In late February Otis Berard heard, for the first time, kokako in the Waiorua watershed. This the most northerly stream system on the island. Geoff de Lisle & Dallas Bishop

Development of an online Beach Patrol Database

You can also help to enter data from scanned cards into an online database system and your assistance here will ensure that the database and data analysis is kept up-to-date. You can help to make this new system effective if you have the inclination, some time and a computer at home that is connected to the internet. Data entry can be done anywhere at any time if you have access to the internet. If you would like to help, please contact the [Database Project Coordinator](#). Read more about the development of the Beach Patrol database [here](#). An update on the development is available [here](#).

Colour varieties of kaka



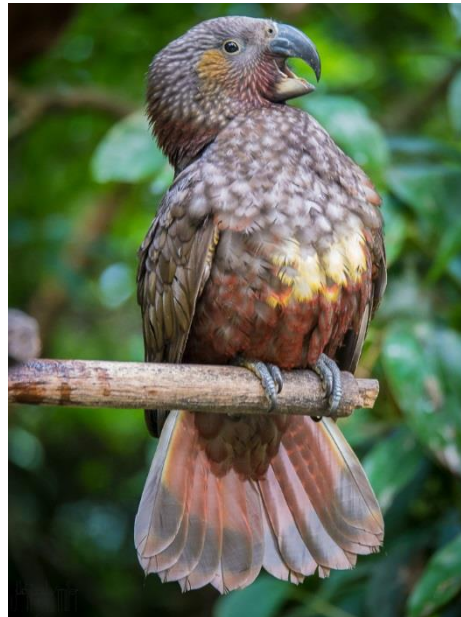
A recent Facebook post by Alfie the Zealandia kaka drew my attention to the presence of the red colour morph, kaka kura.

The following pictures were taken by Judi Lapsley Miller. The adult kaka (left) was hatched at Zealandia seven years ago and is seen only once or twice a year.

Judi noted, *“At a rough guess, I’d say a third of the Zealandia kākā nestlings have golden tummies to some degree or other, and this has been increasing over the years.*

The golden feathers are typically lost by the first moult, it seems, though occasionally we see an adult with just one golden feather remaining. The two photos of fledglings/juveniles, one with a single golden feather and the other (begging) with the full strip across his gorgeous tummy.

With only 14 founder birds at Zealandia (and the occasional self-introduction), the genetic inbreeding is significant, especially as not all founders ended up breeding.”



Colour varieties of kaka have been recognised for many years. Oliver (1955) noted that, “ the kaka is particularly prone to change its brown colour to white, yellow or red, and on the dominance of each of these colours three principal groups may be defined, with a fourth group for mixed brown, red and yellow birds”. Buller (1888) described a number of different varieties of kaka but came to the conclusion “*that the following are merely aberrant varieties of the typical form, and , although sometimes recurrent in different localities, are not entitled to recognition as distinct species*”.

Some 127 years later a DNA-based genetic study has provided evidence to support Buller’s contention. These studies showed little genetic variation and not enough to account for the morphological (size) and behavioural characteristics used to assign the two recognised subspecies in the Checklist (2010), *Nestor meridionalis septentrionalis* (North Island kaka) and *Nestor meridionalis meridionalis* (South Island kaka). Rather, the larger kaka in the southern latitudes of New Zealand are consistent with Bergmann’s rule, that states within a broadly distributed taxonomic clade, populations and species of larger size are found in colder environments, and species of smaller size are found in warmer regions.

Kaka feathers In regards to kaka feathers, Walter Buller noted that “Some half-dozen of the pillows in my house are filled with the feathers of kaka; and they are so delightfully soft and elastic that it is a positive luxury to sleep on them”.

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Nic Dussex , James Sainsbury, Ron Moorhouse, Ian G. Jamieson, Bruce C. Robertson (2015) Evidence for Bergmann’s Rule and Not Allopatric Subspeciation in the Threatened Kaka (*Nestor meridionalis*), , J Hered (2015) 106 (6): 679-691. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jhered/esv079>

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