

# BIRDS NEW ZEALAND

*Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa*

No.34 June 2022



The Magazine of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand



# BIRDS

## NEW ZEALAND

Te Kāhui Mātai Manu o Aotearoa



### Birds New Zealand and Toi Toi wines join forces

Birds New Zealand and Toi Toi wines (Marlborough Wine Ltd) are pleased to announce a joint sponsorship to support the NZ Bird Atlas. The NZ Bird Atlas is a citizen science project aimed at mapping the distribution and relative abundance of all bird species present in New Zealand, running for five years from 2019 to 2024, which anyone with an interest in birds can contribute to.

The project builds on the legacy of our previous two (OSNZ) NZ Bird Atlas projects (1969-79 and 1999-2004) and will provide an up-to-date assessment on the current status of New Zealand's birds, informing conservation management, policy, and public understanding.

The NZ Bird Atlas is the flagship project of the Society, and supports the society's objectives in promoting the study and enjoyment of birds in Aotearoa New Zealand. Toi Toi wines have agreed to sponsor Birds New Zealand, specifically to support six Atlas trips to survey remote areas of the country and gather vital bird observation data.

"Birds New Zealand is pleased to partner with Toi Toi wines to support the NZ Bird Atlas," said Birds New Zealand President Bruce McKinlay.

"Toi Toi wines is pleased to be able to support this national citizen science project through this sponsorship," said Kevin Joyce, Founder and Owner of Toi Toi wines. "We expect that this sponsorship will ensure greater coverage of the back country parts of New Zealand, as the project needs complete coverage of the entire country."

"Birds New Zealand is a voluntary organisation and this national project relies on membership subscriptions and project-specific funding to meet its constitutional objectives and to undertake or support high priority research activities, such as the New Zealand Bird Atlas scheme. Birds New Zealand welcomes Toi Toi wines as a valued key sponsor for the NZ Bird Atlas," said Bruce McKinlay.

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We welcome advertising. Free classified ads for members are at the editor's discretion. Articles or photographs of birds in New Zealand or the South Pacific are welcome such as news about birds, members' activities, birding sites, identification, or letters. Copy deadlines are 10th Feb, May, Aug and 1st Nov. Views expressed by contributors do not necessarily represent those of OSNZ (Inc) or the editor. When you are finished with your magazine please consider passing it on to others who are interested in New Zealand's birds.

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Kākāpō on Pukenui / Anchor Island.

Photo by Oscar Thomas: <https://oscarthomas.nz/>



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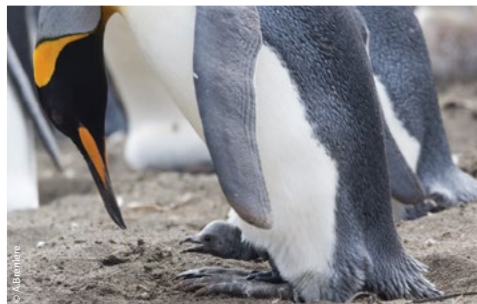
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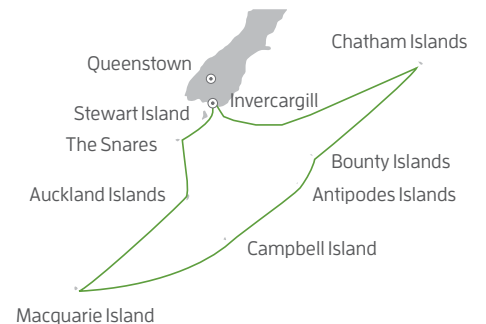
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# From the President's Desk

My Autumn birding has been around Dunedin plus trips to Awarua Bay in Southland and to Mason Bay on Rakiura Stewart Island. A highlight was seeing a Ruddy Turnstone at Mason Bay, as well as a large number of Southern New Zealand Dotterels. Around Dunedin as the seasons have turned, I have been watching the number of Royal Spoonbills reduce as they leave the estuaries around Dunedin and head north.

## Council Meeting

Council met in March by Zoom and had a very successful meeting. We can cover a lot of business very effectively for the Society by meeting online but it does somewhat leave the social side of a meeting lacking. Councillors have said that they are looking forward to catching up with each other and with members in Christchurch in June. At this meeting a particular highlight for me was that Council discussed and adopted a budget for the Society's subscription-based activities for 2022. This is an essential tool to have an understanding of where member subscriptions are spent and to make sure that these funds which underpin the Society are not in deficit.

Work on the Society's website continues to be done by our partners at Xequals. A lot of this was reported in my last column, but one new project area is the setting up of the "Occasional Publications" facility as part of the *Notornis* webpage.

## Zoom Meetings

The Society now has a Zoom account, and this is now available for any Society meeting. If you need access or assistance on how to schedule a meeting, please get hold of me. So far, my observations are that once you get used to the technology it is relatively easy to use; care needs to be taken to ensure you mute your microphone to not disturb the speakers and it's really great to see faces turn up on meetings after such a long gap.

## Membership Secretary

I'd like to welcome Kurien (Koshy) Yohannan to the role of Membership Secretary. This is an important role for the Society and Koshy brings the experience of working with other Society's to this work. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of Imogen Warren who has stood down for personal reasons. Imogen steered the complexities of the Society's membership system during the move to the new platform and worked very hard to keep the Society's membership system working at this time.

## Birds New Zealand Fledgling Fund

Thank you very much to Society members who have supported the development of the Fund. The Society will not have a good future if we do not invest in the next generation of ornithologists and the Fledgling Fund is one way in which we as Birds New Zealand can support young people to engage in our work and get to meet you all. The three 2022 Fledgling award recipients who will attend the NZ Bird Conference are: Blake Hornblow, Imogen Foote, and Maira Fessardi.

The Society was also able to support Enzo Reyes, Michael Fox, and Juliane Mussoi, with a contribution to their registration costs to the 2022 AOC. I'm looking forward to seeing reports from all of these recipients.

## Regional Representative news

I'd like to acknowledge Ian Southey and Neil Robertson who have recently stood down as Regional Representatives in South Auckland and Southland respectively. Both Neil and Ian have provided leadership in their regions for several years.

I welcome Sue Frostick who is settling into the role of Regional Representative in South Auckland. I also welcome Peter Frost back into the role in Whanganui. Regional Representatives are an essential role in the Society to ensure that members concerns and issues are shared with Council, and also to provide leadership for both national and regional projects, ensuring a good network which is essential for the Society.

## Scholarships and Awards

It was with a certain amount of pleasure that I recently received an email from Graeme Taylor as Convenor of the Scientific Committee reporting the results of their work on assessing applications for the David Medway Scholarship and the Pacific Islands Bird Conservation and Research Fund. The Scientific Committee has recommended that the 2022 David Medway Scholarship is awarded to Jane Tansell to support her PhD study on comparing techniques to monitor populations and in particular monitoring chick production and survival in North Island Brown Kiwi at Lake Roto Kare, Taranaki.

The Pacific Island Bird Conservation and Research Fund was created in 2008 to support conservation management and research on endangered bird species which breed on Pacific islands, outside of New Zealand. The Fund is administered by the JS Watson Trust through the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society of New Zealand and is a result of a working partnership between Birds New Zealand and Forest and Bird. The Scientific Committee had strong applications and unanimously agreed that work proposed by James Russell (Auckland University) to assess the impacts of invasive Yellow Crazy Ants on nesting seabirds in French Polynesia should be supported.

## 2022 Conference

By the time this edition of *Birds New Zealand* magazine reaches your mailbox the 2022 NZ Bird Conference and Society Annual General Meeting in Christchurch will be completed. I expect to be on the West Coast as part of the post conference Atlas trip. Nick Allen and the organising team worked very hard in the lead up to the Conference and have organised an excellent event. The Conference programme looks wide ranging and I hope that you will have enjoyed it as much as I have.

Finally, Saturday 14th May was a 'Global Big Day' organised by the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology as part of *eBird*. Although the weather was not encouraging here in Otago those in my car had an excellent day out birdwatching along the coast south of Dunedin. Friends in Otago managed to complete 185 checklists and observed 78 species. It was good fun planning where to head next to fill in gaps in our day list.

BRUCE MCKINLAY, PRESIDENT



▣ Birds New Zealand President Bruce McKinlay, Dunedin Mayor Aaron Hawkins, and Otago Regional Representative Mary Thompson with Otago Branch members opening the Dunedin Town Belt bird count sites: Craig McKenzie.



▲ Kerry-Jayne Wilson/West Coast Penguin Trust.

## Kerry-Jayne Wilson tribute

Kerry-Jayne Wilson, long a member of the Society, passed away in March. In her long career here in New Zealand and overseas Kerry-Jayne produced research results on penguins, Kea, and Chatham Petrel. In recent years Kerry-Jayne focused on Tawaki, Korora and Westland Petrel with her research based from her home in Charleston on the West Coast.

From 1986 until her retirement Kerry-Jayne was a lecturer in ecology at Lincoln University. Here her teaching passion and commitment to the next generation was recognised with the award by the student body of the Green Award for Excellence in Teaching and Support.

Kerry-Jayne was a leader in the Ornithological Society and served on Council and as the South Island Vice President for a number of years. At the local level she was heavily involved in community-led conservation with Banks Peninsula's iwi-led Kaupapa Kereru project, the Ōtamahua Quail Island restoration project, and Kiwi conservation. In 2006, she co-founded the West Coast Penguin Trust and was its inaugural chairperson and research director.

I was proud to be able to present to Kerry-Jayne the Society's R.A. Falla Memorial Award. A full obituary in *Notornis* will follow in due course.

BRUCE MCKINLAY, PRESIDENT



NEW ZEALAND  
**PENGUIN  
INITIATIVE**

## Little Penguin monitoring network

The New Zealand Penguin Initiative (NZPI) is an independent penguin conservation organisation working to enhance and protect the conservation status of NZ penguin species and their habitats. They liaise between a network of NZ community and conservation groups that monitor local Little Penguins or Korora, and provide support for monitoring, protection and advocacy with the aim of better understanding the Little Penguin population in NZ.

There are, however, still many areas where nothing much is known about the local Little Penguin population, so NZPI is keen to get some Korora monitoring coverage in Northland (east and west coast), west of Auckland, east coast of North Island (excluding Napier and Gisborne), North Cape, south coast of Southland (east and west of Invercargill), and the Chatham Islands including Pitt Island. If you are interested in monitoring Little Penguins in your local area and joining the network, please contact NZPI via their website:

<https://www.nzpi.nz/>

## New fossil species of kiwi

A new fossil species of kiwi named *Apteryx littoralis* sp. nov has been described by Alan Tennyson and Barbara Tomotani of Te Papa based on a one-million-year-old bone. The new fossil is the second oldest known record of a kiwi and demonstrates a relatively conservative kiwi morphology since the mid-Pleistocene.

## Join Us Now

You can join Birds New Zealand online right now for just \$1.50 a week. Our new subscription rate of \$80 per year is very reasonable, and for students its just \$40:

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## New members

Birds New Zealand warmly welcomes the following new members: Michael Camm; Kayla Gunson (Northland); Dave Howes; Lena Hartebrodt; Kamya Patel; Mikayla Kendle; Bruce Anderson; Stephen Boyd; Linda Friend; Michael Lorimer; Jason Etherington; Victoria Smith; Magdalena Heunis; Rhianna Marian; Katie Vanderstok; Graham Jones; Kamolphat Atsawawaranunt; Graham Lowther; Jonathan Klawitter (Auckland); Helen Jenkins (South Auckland); Carol Sutherland; Jj Gaites; Tanya O'Neill (Waikato); Freya O'Sullivan (Bay of Plenty); John Kyngdon (Gisborne/Wairoa); Julie Paice (Taranaki); Kerry Borkin; Troy Makan (Volcanic Plateau); John Ruth; Sally Harvey; Bruce Jenkins (Hawkes Bay); Elizabeth Taylor; Cleland Wallace; Emily Yap Juet Yen; Osho Bhonsle; Tertia Thurley; Ritika Ganesh (Manawatu); Jenny Dey; Lisa Bennett (Wairarapa); Vandy Pollard; Paul Hunt; Daniela Casillas; Jan Keast; Clive Robinson; Rachael Ashdown; Dominic Test; David Ainsworth; Lara Gilks; Kathy Cleland; Andrea Westphal; Carter Kurmann; Parker Jones; Christine Reed (Wellington); Wayne Hennessy; Serge Crottaz (Nelson); Will Parsons; Kerry Walshe, Delece (Marlborough); Tineke Witteman; Karen Talbot; Lindsey Conrow; Anna Tabea Aichele; Lauren McCauley; Tamara Stratton; Hedley Bengé; Steve Rowe; Alex Aves; David Wilkinson; Samuel Amaris; Richard Adams (Canterbury); Kit Girling; Claire Hagglund; Blake Hornblow; Beth Wishart; Suzanne Schofield; Nyssa Mildwaters; Bronwen Presswell; Joy Liddicoat; Andrew P Anderson; Manaia Pearmain-Fenton; Tony Pomfret; Johanna Kann (Otago); Kimball Chen; Rose Hynson; Katie Ward-Allen (Southland); and Simon Ducatez (Rest of World).

## Donations

Birds New Zealand warmly thanks the following members for their generous donations: Christina Troup, Anthony Carey, Annette Cunningham, Timothy Short, Graham I. Hunt, Kevin A. Parker, Mikayla Kendle, Thalia Sachtleben, Heather Smithers, Rob Schuckard, Marti Eller, Mel Galbraith, Tony Whitehead, Brenda Pinfold, Clive Robinson, David Pye, Stephen Sharp, John Flux, Mary McEwen, Sue Drummond, Ian Williams, John A. Stewart, Denise Poyner, Anita Spencer, Andrew King, Darren Lees, Jim Kirker, Susan McIntosh, Neil J. Andrews, Ted Kirk, Colin Lunt, William A. Cook, Hinrich Voges, Jillian Hanna, Leslie Graney, Audrey Rendle, Bernard Card, Michael Lorimer, Murray V. Smith, Robert Hanbury-Sparrow, Marshall Clark, Rosemary Messenger, Lara Gilks, Sian Luckie, Elizabeth Taylor, Sharon Alderson, Eddie Bright, Kerry Walshe, David Wilkinson, Angus Fordham, and John Staniland.

## Kākā movements tracked

New research by the Department of Conservation and Manaaki Whenua-Landcare Research tracking Kākā has shed new light on their movements. One of the 25 study birds that was fitted with a GPS and VHF transmitter near Hamilton and Morrinsville and tracked through 2020 and 2021 completed a 1,000 km round trip encompassing various points around Waikato, Coromandel, and islands in the Hauraki Gulf - a travel distance and behaviour never encountered before in the study of Kākā.

## North Island Brown Kiwi vocal behaviour

Reliable estimates of North Island Brown Kiwi (NIBK) abundance and population densities are important in conservation as they allow decision-makers to better manage available resources. Monitoring must be non-invasive, standardised, and scalable. This project will work with Kiwitrack Ltd to develop miniature recorders embedded in the birds' radio transmitter to investigate individual vocal behaviour. We will equip a representative number of birds with these custom transmitters and concurrently deploy environmental acoustic recording units in the areas where the birds live to record individual and community level vocalisations simultaneously. We will analyse all recordings using AviaNZ (<https://avianz.net>) to investigate how vocal activities may vary in different contexts in order to provide insight into NIBK vocal behaviour. This will provide crucial information for the interpretation of acoustic surveys. I am very grateful to Birds New Zealand for supporting my research with the 2021 David Medway Scholarship.

ALBERTO DE ROSA

## Jim Eagles tribute

"The Pūkorokoro family has lost one of its treasures with the death of Jim Eagles in mid-December following a short illness," Keith Woodley told readers in his tribute to Jim in Pūkorokoro Miranda News. Jim Eagles became editor of Pūkorokoro Miranda News in August 2012 and more recently was the coordinator of the Pūkorokoro Miranda Shorebird Centre's Pacific Golden Plover tracking project. In his tribute, Keith described Jim's editorship as follows: "Successive editors had built up PM News, each bringing their own strengths to improve it. But all his predecessors would be unanimous that Jim took it to a whole different level. As front of house at the Shorebird Centre, I get to hear most feedback. And as the years passed, praise for the magazine became a constant."

Prior to taking on that role Jim was the NZ Herald's travel editor, where he wrote extensively on the environment and birds, and had a distinguished career as a newspaperman for nearly 60 years. He was also involved in conservation efforts on Tiritiri Matangi after his retirement through his role as editor of the *Supporters of Tiritiri* newsletter.

## Donations and bequests

Birds New Zealand is working hard to ensure a better future for our birds, but to do so we need your help. We are a registered charity (CC 41020) which means tax credits are available for donations made in NZ. You can donate to us in two ways:

\* Deposit funds into our bank account: 02-0290-0164715-00

\* or Make a credit card payment online: [www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/you-can-help/make-a-donation/#/form/Donation](http://www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/you-can-help/make-a-donation/#/form/Donation)

## Leaving a gift in your will

No matter how much it is, leaving a gift in your will really makes a difference. All funds received go into our Projects Assistance Fund, so you can be confident it will have a real impact. It is important to consult your solicitor, Guardian Trust, or Public Trust office for advice on drawing up your will. A general gift allows us to direct funds where they are needed, but we are also very happy to discuss options if you would like to leave a gift for a specific purpose. There are two options:

\* *Specific Legacy*: You may wish to leave a specific amount of money, shares, bonds, items, or a nominated gift to Birds New Zealand, or

\* *Residual Legacy*: You may wish to leave a gift of all or part of your net estate (what remains after all taxes, specific gifts to family and friends, and the cost of administering the estate have been paid). This should be expressed as a percentage or share of your estate.

## National Wader Census – Winter 2021

A total of 104,073 waders of 21 species were counted during the June–July 2021 wader census, down from 116,369 waders of 21 species in June–July 2020. The only major areas not counted were Parengarenga, Houhora, and Rangaunu harbours (Far North) and Ohiwa Harbour (Bay of Plenty). The Coromandel was included.

South Island Pied Oystercatcher (SIPO) numbers continue to decline with only 56,323 counted but Variable Oystercatcher (VOC) numbers continue to increase, up 201 from 2020 to 4,439. The VOC count is not a true reflection of the total population as many remain on the breeding grounds during winter so are not counted. Bar-tailed Godwit numbers were 9,869 down from 12,813 in 2020 but this may be partly a reflection on the fact 2019 had a high number of juveniles, many of which may have attempted a first northward migration in 2021, even though they were not full adults by then.

The Banded Dotterel count of 4,797 was the lowest since 2013 and NZ Dotterel numbers were higher than 2020 but slightly lower than 2019. Numbers are generally increasing thanks to management at so many breeding sites. Only the Southern NZ Dotterels that move to the South Island in winter were counted with 44 birds counted in 2021, up two from the 2020 count. Red Knot numbers were similar to 2020 but Ruddy Turnstone numbers were almost halved with just 210 counted. Uncommon winter waders included 2 Greater Sand Plover, 1 Hudsonian Godwit, 1 Sanderling, 1 Curlew Sandpiper, 1 Whimbrel, 1 Eastern Curlew, and 1 Terek Sandpiper.

NATIONAL WADER CENSUS COORDINATOR, ADRIAN RIEGEN

## Have you seen a banded bird?

Birds New Zealand (OSNZ) set up the NZ National Bird Banding Scheme in 1950. Since then, members have played an important role in contributing to the growth of the Scheme. The DOC Banding Office appreciates every report we receive – these can be emailed, posted, or submitted via an online form.

We are delighted with the increase in the use of the Sightings Form on the FALCON Bird Banding Database, having recently reached the 500-record milestone. These have been received from every region including the Chathams and Subantarctic Islands; a third of records were from Auckland and Wellington. So far 79 different species have been reported, though 128 records did not identify the specific taxon. Not surprisingly, birds wearing highly visible engraved flags and colour bands such as Caspian Terns, godwits, oystercatchers, Black-billed Gulls and Banded Dotterels make up a third of known species reported. However, some patient observers have used a series of mobile phone photographs to read the metal band number on banded birds.

Records of long-dead birds, such as a skeleton found on a beach, are also valuable, even if you can't identify the species. If you have a record of a banded bird, no matter how old, we would love to hear from you. Perhaps you took a photograph or collected a band and you're not sure whether it was ever reported. Sightings of banded birds can be reported via <https://app.birdbanding.doc.govt.nz/sightings> and photographs emailed to [falcon@doc.govt.nz](mailto:falcon@doc.govt.nz)

## Genetic study of Buller's Albatross

The northern and southern subspecies of Buller's Albatross breed at different times of year. A new study entitled *Genetic connectivity in allopatric seabirds: lack of inferred gene flow between Northern and Southern Buller's albatross populations* tested 53 samples from both subspecies for genetic differentiation and reassessed genetic connectivity between their populations. The results indicate that the different timing of breeding likely limits gene flow between the two subspecies, and that this has important implications for the taxonomic status of Buller's albatrosses (J. R. Wold, C. J. R. Robertson, G. K. Chambers *et al.* *Emu-Austral Ornithology* Vol 121, 2021).

## Another bumper Kākāpō breeding season

As predicted, there has been a bumper Rimu fruiting season and another bumper breeding season for Kākāpō with a total of 60 chicks hatched during the 2021-2022 season. The Kākāpō Recovery Programme reported that there were 56 chicks alive as of 27th April, and 202 adults.

All Kākāpō on Pukenui Anchor Island are now tracked to help with health checks and the swift identification of sick birds when they stop moving around much. An innovation this season has been new 'train station' software installed at the main hut on Pukenui.

Bells in the hut announce new chick 'arrivals and departures' at the nests. Radio contact with volunteers in the field means they can be directed to go to check on the new chicks when the adult female departs from the nest to feed during the night. DOC staff also report there is so much Rimu fruit this season that most Kākāpō chicks have been growing faster than the average rate of growth.

This season the fungal pneumonia *Aspergillosis* has been found on Pukenui. One adult female and one chick have died from it there so far this year, and another adult female has been taken into care and is being treated in Auckland.

## Records Appraisal Committee annual report

RAC Secretary Elizabeth (Biz) Bell continues to provide timely and efficient administrative support to the committee and submitters. Paul Sagar is a co-opted member of the committee, and provides independent assessment of Unusual Bird Reports (UBRs) submitted by RAC members. This occurred five times in 2021.

The online UBR reporting system on the Birds New Zealand website continues to be the main source of UBRs received. However, there have been problems with the webpage. In late 2021 the online reporting form ceased to function, and downloading of UBR reporting forms was only possible from a subset of browsers. Steps are being taken to resolve this as the webpage is migrated to the new Birds New Zealand website. Council will be briefed on this at their June meeting.

A total of 74 UBRs was received in 2021, which were assessed between March 2021 and February 2022. This was substantially fewer than the 95 UBRs received in 2020. There is no obvious reason for this decrease. Fifty (68%) of the 2021 UBRs were accepted by the committee. No new species were added to the New Zealand list.

An online database of Unusual Bird Reports (<http://rare.birds.org.nz/>) was launched in 2016. The database and the systems supporting it continue to work well. The database provides almost immediate feedback on UBR submissions and decisions, as well as a searchable database of all submissions and decisions dating back to the 1960s. It includes hyperlinks to publications referring to individual UBRs, and to NZ Birds Online species pages.

A paper reporting on the 193 RAC decisions from 2019-20 was published in the December 2021 issue of *Notornis*: Miskelly, C.M.; Crossland, A.C.; Saville, I.; Southey, I.; Tennyson, A.J.D.; Bell, E.A. 2021. *Vagrant and extra-limital bird records accepted by the Birds New Zealand Records Appraisal Committee 2019-2020*. *Notornis* 68: 253-265.

I thank Biz, Paul, and my fellow committee members Andrew Crossland, Ian Saville, Ian Southey, and Alan Tennyson for their efficient support during 2021.

COLIN MISKELLY, CONVENOR

## Conservation status of birds in Aotearoa New Zealand 2021

Of the 491 birds assessed by an expert panel, 25 have improved in threat status and 22 have declined since the last assessment in 2016 (*Conservation status of birds in Aotearoa New Zealand, 2021*. Hugh A. Robertson, Karen A. Baird, Graeme P. Elliott, Rodney A. Hitchmough, Nikki J. McArthur, Troy D. Makan, Colin M. Miskelly, Colin F. J. O'Donnell, Paul M. Sagar, R. Paul Scofield, Graeme A. Taylor and Pascale Michel, Department of Conservation, NZ Threat Classification Series 36, December 2021).

Five are no longer in the 'Nationally Critical' category and none have been added to it. Climate impacts are for the first time assessed as a factor in 23 (85%) of the birds in the 'At Risk - Declining' category.

Significant improvements in threat status of kiwi include North Island Brown Kiwi moving from 'At Risk - Declining' to 'Not Threatened' and Haast Tokoeka moving from 'Nationally Critical' to 'Nationally Vulnerable'. More accurate aerial surveys allowed researchers to uncover more Black-billed Gulls than were previously known, taking them from 'Nationally Critical' to 'At Risk - Declining'.

Snipe and pipits have reaped the benefits of the 'Million Dollar Mouse' eradication project on Antipodes Island creating a predator free home for them. Likewise, Campbell Island Teal continue to increase, and have a status upgrade, nearly two decades after rats were removed from Campbell Island. Haast Tokoeka have benefited from intensive management including predator control and the discovery of a small subpopulation in 2019.

The status of Spotted Shag has got worse, moving from 'Not Threatened' to 'Nationally Vulnerable'. Breeding pairs on Banks Peninsula were decimated following the destruction of many cliff ledges used for nesting by the Christchurch earthquake, and numbers are declining elsewhere in NZ.

The list of 22 birds that have declined in threat status also includes Rowi/Okarito Brown Kiwi, Northern Royal Albatross, Southern Royal Albatross, Buller's Albatross, Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, Yellow-crowned Parakeet, Mohoua, Long-tailed Cuckoo, White-capped Noddy, Black Noddy, Brown Skua, Grey Petrel, Auckland Islands Banded Dotterel, Black Shag, and Little Pied Shag.

The panel also assessed that 69 birds are known or predicted to be adversely affected by long-term climate trends and/or extreme climatic events, assigning them the qualifier 'Climate Impact'.

The main ones impacted are marine birds whose food supplies and feeding areas are likely to change with changing currents and upwellings, birds confined to islands subject to an increasing frequency and severity of droughts, riverbed specialists that will be subject to greater fluctuations of river flow, wave-platform specialists and shoreline nesters that will be impacted by rising sea levels, alpine specialists that will be subject to changes in habitat and predator guilds, and forest birds that will be subject to greater predation by rats and stoats as a result of an increased frequency and magnitude of beech masting events.

Interestingly, 23 (85%) of the 27 birds assessed as 'At Risk - Declining' have been given the Climate Impact qualifier - a far higher percentage than in any other Threatened or At Risk category.

Ian Angus, Department of Conservation Director - Terrestrial, says the improved status of 25 native birds over the past five years is reason to celebrate. "In the case of brown kiwi, it shows that the sustained conservation efforts over 30 years by community groups, iwi and hapū, Save the Kiwi, scientists and government agencies are working. But there is no room for complacency. Even birds with an improved status, such as brown kiwi, are flagged with the qualifier 'Conservation Dependent' meaning that they will almost certainly backslide without continued, concerted conservation management."



▲ Rakiura Tokoeka.



▲ Mottled Petrel.



▲ Adelie Penguin.

# Birds of Rakiura's tracks and beaches

Words and photos by Colin Miskelly

A recent tramping trip to Rakiura Stewart Island provided an opportunity to contribute observations to the Society's New Zealand Bird Atlas and Beach Patrol schemes. Between 30th December 2021 and 19th January 2022, I walked the north-west circuit, Rakiura track, and southern circuit in that sequence, and also visited Te Wharawhara Ulva Island, and walked several short tracks near Pā nui o Hau Oban. While walking these tracks and beaches, I recorded all birds seen and heard every 30 minutes, before starting a new list.

All data were recorded in a notebook, to ensure that I had a separate record if challenged by an *eBird* reviewer. Depending on terrain, the distance covered per 30 mins varied between one and two kilometres, and averaged about 1.5 km. Each dot on the accompanying map represents one atlas checklist (total = 418), and the red lines show beaches searched (total = 44.5 km, some sections of which were beyond the standard tracks).

One of the birding highlights on Rakiura is seeing active Tokoeka/Southern Brown Kiwi in the daylight. I encountered foraging Rakiura Tokoeka on seven occasions during the day (red dots on map); however, this was quite a rare event. When survey effort was standardised to an 8-hour day in suitable habitat, the kiwi encounter rate was about 0.7 birds per day.

Most of Rakiura's forests have low native bird diversity due to very high densities of ship rats and feral cats. Three locations or habitats are notable exceptions. Visitors to the only settlement at Oban can expect to see good numbers of Kākā and Kererū, due to localised predator control (and supplementary feeding of Kākā). However, both species are much scarcer elsewhere on the island. Ulva Island is a predator-free sanctuary in Paterson Inlet, and has a fantastic diversity and abundance of endemic forest birds, including four species that are no longer present elsewhere on Rakiura (Weka, Tītipounamu, Tieke, and Mohua).

The third exception is the mānuka forest on the Freshwater and Rakeahua River flats, where Kakaruwai/South Island Robins, Mātātā/Fernbirds, and Pīpīpi/Brown Creeper were common (Kakaruwai and Pīpīpi were also common on Ulva Island). Grant Harper (*Notornis* 56: 63–81) provided a possible explanation for why these three species persist in mānuka forest but are rare or absent elsewhere on Rakiura, suggesting that their persistence was due to the low abundance of ship rats in mānuka forest compared to other forest types on the island.

Pīpīpi were also encountered in subalpine scrub, but only two single birds were encountered in tall forest other than on Ulva Island - these were near Kaipipi Bay, and on the Mt Anglem/





Hananui track. Sites where Kakaruwai, Pipipi, and/or Mātātā were encountered are shown by yellow dots on the map.

In order to quantify the typical forest bird community on Rakiura, I tabulated data from 80 hours of counts (i.e. Atlas checklists) undertaken in tall forest, and excluding the three exceptional sites and habitats (i.e. in and around Oban, Ulva Island, and mānuka river flat forest). Ngrungiru/NZ Tomtit was the most frequently encountered species (11 per hour) followed by bellbird (7 per hour). Other species were much scarcer.

The only other endemic species that were recorded at a rate of more than one bird per hour were Red-crowned Parakeet (Kākāriki), Tūi, Riroriro/Grey Warbler, and Pīwakawaka/NZ Fantail. Other endemic forest bird species were absent, or were so scarce that they were best reported as birds per day rather than birds per hour.

Rakiura is the only breeding location for southern Tūturiwhatu/New Zealand Dotterels, where they breed above the tree line. I failed to find any at known breeding sites on Rocky Mountain and Mt Rakeahua, but did see a few birds on west coast beaches (four on Doughboy Beach and three on Masons Bay).

A total of 201 dead seabirds were found, with nearly all (191) on west coast beaches. This included 104 Korure/Mottled Petrels that all would have died in late December. However, the timing of my visit meant that the numbers found were split fairly evenly between 2021 and 2022, which may conceal the extent of the wreck in annual summaries.

The most surprising find was a headless black-and-white *pygoscelid* penguin. My guess at the time of finding it was that it was an Adelie Penguin, based on two sightings of live Adelie Penguins on New Zealand coasts in late 2021. However, Adelie Penguin and Chinstrap Penguin have almost identical plumage and measurements from the neck down. With the help of my Te Papa colleague Lara Shepherd, we were able to confirm this as the fifth Adelie Penguin to reach New Zealand (and the second for the beach patrol scheme), based on its DNA.

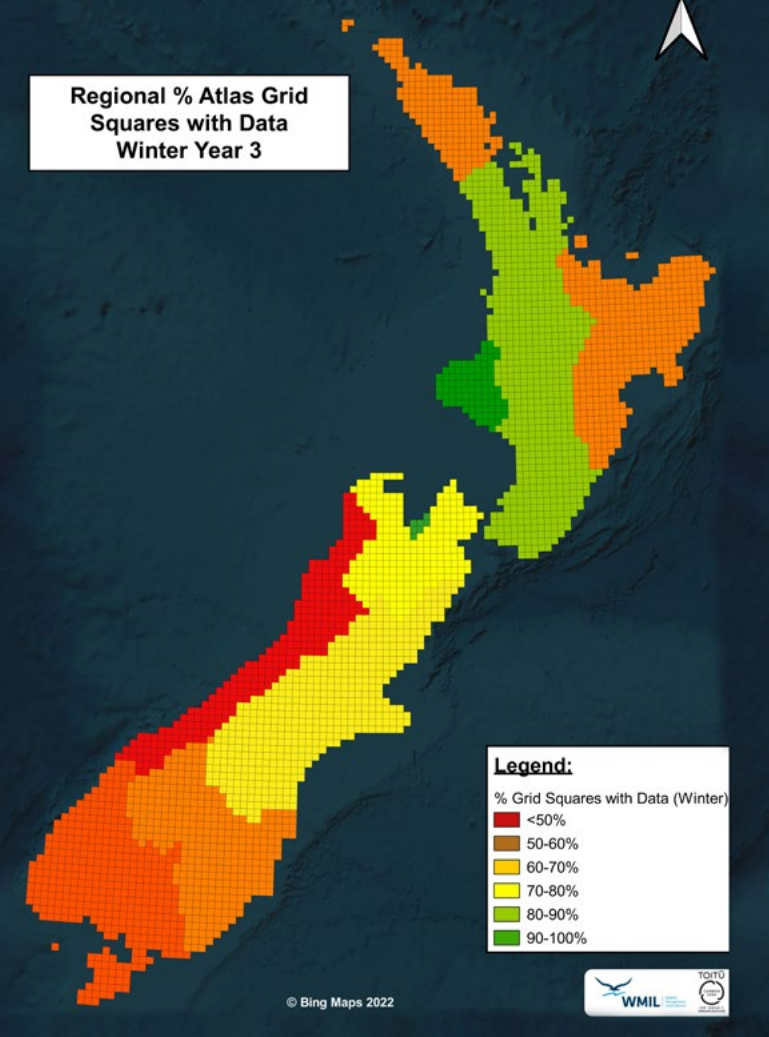
With many thanks to Gordon Miskelly and Denise Albert for their contributions of live and dead bird records on the north-west circuit, and Lara Shepherd for identifying the mystery penguin.

Colin Miskelly is Curator of Vertebrates at Te Papa and a member of the Birds New Zealand Council.



▲ South Island Robin/Kakaruwai.

### Regional % Atlas Grid Squares with Data Winter Year 3



Map of Year 3 nationwide grid squares winter coverage.



Male Rock Wren, Gertrude Valley: Craig McKenzie/NZ Birds Online.

## Atlas project passes three year landmark

June 2022 marked the end of the third year of data collection for the NZ Bird Atlas project. After three years of atasing across the country, nearly 80,000 effort hours have gone into the project, which equates to more than 3,333 days! Now, as the project enters its fourth year, we have nearly hit the incredible landmark of a quarter of a million checklists submitted to the project, submitted by over 1,100 Atlasers.

There are just 226 grid squares (6.91% of all 3,232) that still have no data in them, so this remains one of the key priorities for all of us. Entering observations across the grid is important, as is gathering continual observations for all species across all four seasons. That continues to be one of the highest priorities, and a challenge that excites us.

### Atlas expedition funding boost

The Atlas team are very happy about the fantastic news that Toi Toi wines have agreed to fund six Atlas expeditions to target under-surveyed areas across the country. We are immensely grateful to the Toi Toi wines team for providing this incredibly generous funding. We know it's going to help the Atlas project and community reach its goal of gathering a nationally significant dataset to help inform conservation and research across local, regional and national scales. We're excited to get the first of these expeditions off the ground by taking a group of keen Atlasers to the West Coast after the Birds New Zealand annual conference in Christchurch. This will help gather a large amount of data in this hitherto under-surveyed region.

Further expeditions will be announced in the near future, with details on how you can get involved. We really hope you can join us, as we know these are going to not only be immensely effective at gathering a large amount of valuable

bird observations but will also be a great way for the community to come together and have fun too.

### Grid square coverage

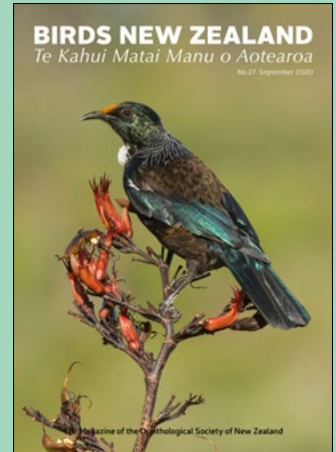
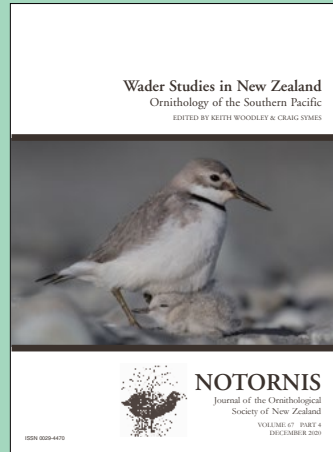
As we have discussed before, to reach total grid square coverage, we will all need to increase our focus as an atasing community. For that we will need to continue to engage and support each other across regions, to reach the target of, not only 100% Atlas grid squares with data, but also in our attempts to document all of the possible species, within each square, across all four seasons. As we enter our fourth Winter season, there remain key areas that need greater spatial coverage of data input which are highlighted in the map above. Regions such as Gisborne, Hawke's Bay and large swathes of backcountry areas in Canterbury, and Otago are still in need of a lot more Winter Effort.

### Atlas tools

The Atlas Effort Map, Species Maps, Grid Square Summary Pages and KML files are all powerful interactive tools to help provide near up to the hour information on effort hours, both diurnal and nocturnal, as well as the volume of checklists and the species tally for each individual square, through each of the four seasons. We have updated the KML files for download on the NZ Bird Atlas *eBird* portal, just look under the Supporting Materials section.

We have also created some valuable higher range effort maps that are available for download from the NZ Bird Atlas *eBird* portal too. These maps will help better reveal areas that have low amounts of diurnal and nocturnal effort across regions, to better support more focused atasing. You can find these available for download under the Supporting Materials section.

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To join, just fill out the membership form online here:

<https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/membership-form-nz/#join>



## Nocturnal effort

While the majority of birding is biased towards the daylight hours, as we creep into the darker winter months, we wish to encourage the Atlas community to keep going out after sunset in grid squares in search of nocturnal species. As always, remember that negative data is still good data. If you go out at night in the hope of detecting nocturnal species such as owls, and even after half an hour don't detect any species at all, please still submit those lists with a checklist comment of 'No species detected'. While it may be a bit disheartening, remember that you are helping show where species are not as abundant, or not present at all. Be sure to use the Nocturnal Effort Hours dropdown on the Atlas Effort Map to see where needs the most effort.

## Research datasets

We are continuing to work with other agencies to upload their bird count data to eBird and the Atlas dataset, including regional councils and ecological consultancies. Any members who are involved with research remember that there is immense value in submitting your data to the Atlas dataset via eBird, or indeed submitting data whilst you are undertaking your research. This is particularly true when undertaking research in harder to reach spots, i.e., backcountry areas or remote islands.

Even submitting five-minute counts while having a meal or a cup of tea, or starting a checklist to gather bird observations as you walk to your study site can help gather some immensely valuable data. This will not only help us in our goal to fill all 3,232 grid squares with data, but also to provide long term data in these remote areas and beyond, that we know is of huge value to avoid

shifting baseline syndrome. If you have large bird count datasets, or other datasets sat in a notebook, or on a hard drive gathering dust, and don't know how to get it together to enter to the Atlas portal via eBird, please just sing out to the Atlas team. We are more than happy to help you.

## Help and support

Overall, we hope the Atlas community will continue to enjoy the next two years of this nationally important project. Using the tips above, you can really tease out those gaps in your local and regional squares or even squares further afield, and help fill those areas with much needed effort. If you are struggling to master these tools, want further information, or want us to talk at your regional meetings, please don't hesitate to send the Atlas team an email ([nzbirdatlas@wmil.co.nz](mailto:nzbirdatlas@wmil.co.nz)). We'd be happy to talk you through them, answer any questions and/or deliver a presentation on your region's atlas progress at your next monthly meeting.

Thank you as always for putting in your time and effort to help us work towards gathering one of the most impressive national Atlas datasets. The project is nothing without your help and we are continually appreciative of the unbelievable amount of time, and effort the community have put in since this Atlas project began three years ago. We hope to ensure that all of you continue to enjoy the Atlas project and we are driven to support all of you as we all work to achieve total coverage and gathering data that is as scientifically valuable as possible. All the while, we hope you continue having as much fun as possible.

THE NZ BIRD ATLAS TEAM



■ Cox's Sandpiper (left) with Sharp-tailed Sandpiper. Lake Ellesmere, November 2016. Image © Mike Ashbee/NZ Birds Online.

## Ten great places to see waders in Aotearoa NZ

By Michael Szabo

One of the world's nine migratory water bird 'flyways' connects Aotearoa New Zealand with Arctic Siberia and Alaska, via East Asia and Australasia.

This means that Aotearoa is a great place to see – and photograph – Arctic-breeding migrant waders and the tern species that use the flyway, in addition to our amazing resident endemic waders and terns.

About a dozen Arctic breeding wading bird species make an incredible migration each year to Aotearoa to spend the southern Spring and Summer here from about September to about March, when they return to their Arctic breeding grounds. The main species we get here are Bar-tailed Godwit, Red Knot, Pacific Golden Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Whimbrel, Eastern Curlew, Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Pectoral Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Marsh Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint, and Grey-tailed Tattler.

Migratory terns that use the flyway include Little and Common, with Arctic, White-winged Black, Whiskered and Australian Gull-billed also possible as vagrants. Our endemic White-fronted, Black-fronted, and Fairy terns are resident, although some mainly immature White-fronted Terns migrate to south-east Australia for the winter.

Our resident endemic waders are here year-round: Variable Oystercatcher (VOC), South Island Pied Oystercatcher (SIPO), Black Stilt, NZ Dotterel, and Wrybill, although some Banded Dotterels migrate to Australia or New Caledonia in autumn for the southern winter.

The Wrybill, Black Stilt, and SIPO breed in South Island braided river habitats and then migrate to coastal wintering sites in the North Island, or the coast of the South Island. The endemic Southern NZ Dotterel breeds on Rakiura Stewart Island and winters around Patterson Inlet and Mason Bay on Rakiura, and Awarua Bay in Southland. The Northern NZ Dotterel breeds around the coast of the North Island. Some stay at their breeding grounds all year and some migrate to northern coasts in winter flocks.

The NZ Shore Plover breeds at the Chatham Islands plus there are translocation sites in the North Island at Motutapu Island and Portland Island. The endemic VOC breeds around the coast of both main islands. Some stay at their breeding grounds all year and some migrate to northern coasts in winter flocks.

Just about every coastal estuary and beach in Aotearoa is potential habitat for these waders and terns at some point in their life-cycle.

Over the following pages we highlight ten great places to see these brilliant birds around the country, from Parengarenga Harbour in the Far North to Awarua Bay in Southland.

The Birds New Zealand national wader scheme monitors wader sites around the country twice a year in Summer and Winter. To get involved in these surveys please contact your Regional Representative or National Wader Count Coordinators

Adrian Riegen [wader.count.ni@birdsanz.org.nz](mailto:wader.count.ni@birdsanz.org.nz) or  
Andrew Crossland [wader.count.si@birdsanz.org.nz](mailto:wader.count.si@birdsanz.org.nz)

### Parengarenga Harbour, Far North

This scenic 6,300-hectare estuary at the northern end of the Aupouri Peninsula is the northernmost in the country, and an important site for migrant and endemic waders from September to March. To get there head north along State Highway One, turn right onto unsealed Paua Road about 15km past Te Kao, just by a large green barn. After about 5.5 km turn right and continue to the end of the road where you will see a new wharf on the right. About 500 metres before the wharf you can check the adjacent estuary for waders, especially at half-tide. Then continue on to the car park near the new wharf.

You can view the estuary from by the new wharf here, and you can walk further along to the end of the small peninsula, checking any waders visible across the estuary channel to the south and over on the main Kokota Sandspit to the east. At low tide the birds are widely dispersed but from about half-tide they gather in more concentrated groups, so a spotting scope is essential. At high tide they tend to move to roost on the famous pure white sand at Kokota Sandspit where they are more distant and sometimes not as easy to view, even with a scope.

Getting over to the sandspit is only practicable if you have a boat as there are no public boat services to ferry you across. Access to the sandspit is not always possible.

In addition to the regular Arctic breeding waders already mentioned and endemic waders such as SIPO and Banded Dotterel, rarities recorded here have included Greater Sand Plover, Common Greenshank, Little Whimbrel, Great Knot, Wandering Tattler, Sanderling, Grey Plover, Black-tailed Godwit, and Hudsonian Godwit.

Other species that can be present within the wider estuary include Little Penguin, Banded Rail, Spotless Crake, Reef Heron, White Heron, Little Egret, Cattle Egret, Australasian Bittern, Royal Spoonbill, Caspian Tern, White-fronted Tern, Sacred Kingfisher, and Pied Shag.



■ Southern New Zealand Dotterel, male in breeding plumage. Awarua Bay, July 2011. Image © by Craig McKenzie/NZ Birds Online.

Contact Adrian Riegen about future wader surveys:  
[wader.count.ni@birdsanz.org.nz](mailto:wader.count.ni@birdsanz.org.nz)

### **Ambury Regional Park, Mangere Bridge**

This well-known publicly accessible wader site on the south Manukau Harbour is one of our most watched and productive sites for waders, including rarities. The foreshore path that runs down from Ambury Park Farm for about two kilometres to the basin at Mangere Bridge allows you to watch waders on the adjacent mudflats and shell banks, and sometimes on the adjacent paddocks. There is a hide at the western end of the path close to a wader roost site. A few hundred metres further east there is another wader roost site at Shell Island, and then a few hundred metres past that another roost site at a small peninsula that is known as 'the radio mast' (where there is no longer a radio mast). These are best searched with a spotting scope at high tide. The grass along the Kiwi Esplanade foreshore is also an important roost site for SIPOs and VOCs.

In addition to the regular Arctic breeding waders already mentioned and endemic waders such as Wrybill, SIPO, NZ Dotterel, and Banded Dotterel, rarities here have included Little Stint, Hudsonian Godwit, Black-tailed Godwit, Black Stilt, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Terek Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Common Greenshank, Lesser Yellowlegs, Great Knot, Grey Plover, Semipalmated Plover, Greater Sand Plover, Lesser Sand Plover, Latham's Snipe, Little Egret, Common Tern, Little Tern, Black-fronted Tern, and NZ Fairy Tern.

Other species that can be present include Banded Rail, Royal Spoonbill, White-faced Heron, Reef Heron, Black-fronted Dotterel, Caspian Tern, White-fronted Tern, Black-billed Gull, Arctic Skua, Australasian Shoveler, Sacred Kingfisher, and various native shag species.

The Auckland Branch runs regular guided walks there.

Contact Regional Representative Ian McLean:  
[birds.auckland@birdsanz.org.nz](mailto:birds.auckland@birdsanz.org.nz)

### **Pūkorooro Miranda, South Auckland**

This world-famous wader site on the Firth of Thames is one of our most productive sites for waders, including rarities. It is especially good at high tide when the birds gather to roost near the hides. There is a coastal track that connects the Pūkorooro Miranda Shorebird Centre with coastal hides and a designated car parking area with a toilet. The centre itself offers overnight accommodation and has toilets. There is no public transport option.

A spotting scope is essential here.

In addition to the regular Arctic breeding waders already mentioned and endemic waders such as Wrybill, SIPO, Banded Dotterel and NZ Dotterel, the many rarities found here have included Little Stint, Asian Dowitcher, Hudsonian Godwit, Black-tailed Godwit, Black Stilt, Little Whimbrel, Sanderling, Broad-billed Sandpiper, Terek Sandpiper, Common Sandpiper, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Common Greenshank, Great Knot, Grey-tailed Tattler, Grey Plover, Greater Sand Plover, Lesser Sand Plover, Oriental Plover, Ruff, Chestnut-breasted Shelduck, Chestnut Teal, Northern Shoveler, Short-tailed Shearwater, White-winged Black Tern, Arctic Tern, Common Tern, Australian Gull-billed Tern, NZ Fairy Tern, Little Tern, and Black-fronted Tern.

Other species present can include Black-fronted Dotterel, Royal Spoonbill, White Heron, Reef Heron, White-faced Heron, Australasian Bittern, Glossy Ibis, Cattle Egret, Little Egret, Banded Rail, Brown Teal, Caspian Tern, White-fronted Tern, Black-billed Gull, Arctic Skua, Sacred Kingfisher, and (offshore) Spotted Shag.

Contact Adrian Riegen about future wader surveys  
[wader.count.ni@birdsanz.org.nz](mailto:wader.count.ni@birdsanz.org.nz) or contact Pūkorooro Miranda Shorebird Centre: <https://shorebirds.org.nz/>

### **Maketu and Little Waihi, Bay of Plenty**

These two estuaries on either side of Maketu are important feeding and roosting areas for waders of national and international importance. A spotting scope is essential here. Both are viewable from the landward side and both have sandspits next to the outlet to the sea (at Maketu Beach and Pukehina Beach).

In addition to the regular Arctic breeding waders already mentioned and endemic waders such as Wrybill, SIPO, Banded Dotterel and NZ Dotterel, rarities here have included American Golden Plover, Grey Plover, Oriental Plover, Hudsonian Godwit, Black-tailed Godwit, Grey-tailed Tattler, Sanderling, Great Knot, Greater Sand Plover, Lesser Sand Plover, Ruff, Common Sandpiper, Grey Phalarope, Australian White Ibis, Chestnut Teal, Brown Teal, Pomarine Skua, Arctic Tern, Common Tern, NZ Fairy Tern, Little Tern, White-winged Black Tern, Black-fronted Tern, and Cattle Egret.

Other birds present can include Banded Rail, Spotless Crake, Australasian Bittern, Reef Heron, Royal Spoonbill, Arctic Skua, and Black-billed Gull.



■ Oriental Plover in breeding plumage, Ohiwa  
February 2016 by Adam Clarke /NZ Birds Online.

Contact Regional Representative Paul Cuming  
[birds.bop.volcanic@birdsanz.org.nz](mailto:birds.bop.volcanic@birdsanz.org.nz) or  
Adrian Riegen: [wader.count.ni@birdsanz.org.nz](mailto:wader.count.ni@birdsanz.org.nz)

### Ahuriri Estuary, Napier

This 470-hectare estuary in Napier and the adjacent Westshore Lagoon 'scrapes' and Southern Marsh area are relatively easy to access on foot, or with a bicycle. You can start at the car park on the main road, walk along the estuary boardwalk and view the estuary. Alternatively park along from the closed road that runs next to the railway line to the railway overbridge, then down the underpath to reach the Westshore scrapes, or over the bridge and along the underpath on the other side to view the Southern Marsh. A scope is essential here.

In addition to the regular Arctic breeding waders already mentioned and endemic waders such as SIPO and Banded Dotterel, rarities here have included NZ Shore Plover, Grey-tailed Tattler, Wrybill, Wilson's Phalarope, Black Stilt, Australian Gull-billed Tern, White-winged Black Tern, Glossy Ibis, Cattle Egret, Little Egret, and Chestnut-breasted Shelduck.

Other species present can include Black-fronted Dotterel, Royal Spoonbill, Reef Heron, White-faced Heron, Australasian Bittern, Banded Rail, Caspian Tern, White-fronted Tern, Black-billed Gull, NZ Dabchick, and Sacred Kingfisher.

The Hawke's Bay Branch organises guided walks there.

Contact Regional Representative Bernie Kelly:  
[birds.hawkesbay@birdsanz.org.nz](mailto:birds.hawkesbay@birdsanz.org.nz)

### Manawatu Estuary, Foxton Beach

This is a relatively compact site with easy access. At Foxton Beach there is a viewing platform at the end of Darwick Street by a motel where you can view the estuary sandspit. From there a walkway around to the estuary is worth taking. A scope is very useful here when the tide is out. It is also worth checking paddocks and ponds between Foxton township and Foxton Beach for Australasian Bittern and Cattle Egret.

In addition to the regular Arctic breeding waders already mentioned and endemic waders such as Wrybill and Banded Dotterel, rarities have included NZ Shore Plover, Terek Sandpiper, Common Greenshank, Hudsonian Godwit, Grey Plover, Great Knot, Red-kneed Dotterel, Black-fronted Dotterel, Erect-crested Penguin, White-eyed Duck, Chestnut Teal, Little Egret, Pomarine Skua, Long-tailed Skua, NZ Fairy Tern, White-winged Black Tern,

Common Tern, and Arctic Tern.

Other species present can include Black-billed Gull, White-fronted Tern, Caspian Tern, Black-fronted Tern, Little Tern, White-faced Heron, Australasian Bittern, White Heron, and Royal Spoonbill.

Contact Regional Representative Phil Battley about future wader surveys: [birds.manawatu@birdsanz.org.nz](mailto:birds.manawatu@birdsanz.org.nz)

### Motueka Sandspit, Tasman District

This wild sand and shingle spit less than a kilometre south of the Motueka River mouth is several kilometres long. About 45 kilometres west of Nelson, it is part of the Motueka River delta, which consists of the sandspit, the river mouth, and the adjacent estuary. There is easy access on foot from a nearby car parking area. A signpost marks the start of the walk. The sandspit is an internationally important site listed under the Ramsar convention for wetlands due to the numbers of waders, terns and gulls that use the site. A spotting scope is useful here.

In addition to the regular Arctic breeding waders already mentioned and endemic waders such as Wrybill, SIPO and Banded Dotterel, rarities at the spit have included Asian Dowitcher, Great Knot, Black-tailed Godwit, Terek Sandpiper, Southern NZ Dotterel, Eastern Curlew, Whimbrel, Black Stilt, Australian Gull-billed Tern, Little Tern, Common Tern, and on the river itself, White-winged Black Tern.

Other species present can include Arctic Skua, Black-billed Gull, Black-fronted Tern, White-fronted Tern, Caspian Tern, Spotted Shag, Cape Barren Goose, Reef Heron, White Heron, Cattle Egret, Royal Spoonbill, and Cirl Bunting.

Contact Regional Representative Paul Griffiths about wader surveys in the area [birds.nelson@birdsanz.org.nz](mailto:birds.nelson@birdsanz.org.nz) or  
Adrian Riegen: [wader.count.ni@birdsanz.org.nz](mailto:wader.count.ni@birdsanz.org.nz)

### Lake Ellesmere/Te Waihoua, Canterbury

This vast 197 square kilometre lake is one our most productive sites for waders, including rarities. It has multiple access points including Embankment Road, Jarvis Road, Yarr's Bay, Greenpark Sands, Hart's Creek, and Kaitorete Spit. A spotting scope is essential here.

In addition to the regular Arctic breeding waders already mentioned and endemic waders such as Wrybill, SIPO and Banded Dotterel, the many rarities found here have included Cox's Sandpiper, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Oriental Pratincole,



■ NZ Shore Plover with chick, Mana Island, December 2012. Image © Glenda Rees /NZ Birds Online.

Wilson's Phalarope, Red-necked Phalarope, Grey Phalarope, American Golden Plover, Little Stint, Long-toed Stint, Little Whimbrel, Hudsonian Godwit, Black-tailed Godwit, Sanderling, Common Greenshank, Great Knot, Grey-tailed Tattler, Oriental Plover, Greater Sand Plover, Black Stilt, NZ Shore Plover, Cape Barren Goose, Chestnut-breasted Shelduck, Northern Shoveler, Hoary-headed Grebe, Antipodean Albatross, Intermediate Egret, Brown Skua, Gull-billed Tern, and White-winged Black Tern.

Interesting and unusual seabirds have also been recorded flying past offshore from the seaward side of Kaitorete Spit, which forms the eastern edge of the lake, including Adelie Penguin, Light-mantled Sooty Albatross, Grey-Headed Albatross, Southern Giant Petrel (white morph), Antarctic Petrel, White-headed Petrel, Soft-plumaged Petrel, Grey-backed Storm Petrel, Black-bellied Storm Petrel, and Antarctic Fulmar.

Other species present around the lake can include Gt Crested Grebe, White Heron, Cattle Egret, Little Egret, Royal Spoonbill, Australasian Bittern, Glossy Ibis, Spotless Crake, Marsh Crake, Caspian Tern, Black-fronted Tern, Little Tern, Black-billed Gull, Arctic Skua, Black Swan, and various native shag and waterfowl. The Canterbury Branch organises annual surveys.

Contact Regional Representative

Don Goodale: [birds.canterbury@birdsNZ.org.nz](mailto:birds.canterbury@birdsNZ.org.nz) or

Andrew Crossland: [wader.count.si@birdsNZ.org.nz](mailto:wader.count.si@birdsNZ.org.nz)

### Tasman River delta at Glentanner, Mackenzie Basin

This breathtaking scenic location can be accessed from Glentanner Caravan Park or from the public track to the right of the main road at a small turn-off just past the Glentanner caravan park. Walk to the edge of the delta where the nearest channel runs down to Lake Pukaki and look for endemic waders there in Spring and Summer. A spotting scope is useful but not always essential as the birds can be quite close here.

This is usually a good site for Black Stilt. The other endemic wader, tern and gull species that occur here from about August to March are Wrybill, Banded Dotterel, SIPO, Black-fronted Tern, and Black-billed Gull.

Although this site is not noted for Arctic breeding migrant waders, other species often present can include Gt Crested Grebe, NZ Scaup, Paradise Shelduck, Grey Duck, Grey Teal, NZ Falcon (check trees nearby), Rifleman (check Matagouri nearby),

White-faced Heron, NZ Pipit, and some native shag species. In addition, Kea, Long-tailed Cuckoo, NZ Tomtit and Bellbird can be present during summer in the vicinity of Aoraki/Mt Cook village where there are tracks to Mueller Lake and Hooker Valley Track, and the Tasman Lake lookout track.

Contact Andrew Crossland: [wader.count.si@birdsNZ.org.nz](mailto:wader.count.si@birdsNZ.org.nz)

### Awarua Bay, Southland

The south-western end of this extensive 2,000 hectare bay is viewable east across the road from the Bluff ferry terminal area. It is about 400m away at the closest point, so a spotting scope is essential here. Waders are sometimes viewable across the water on the opposite point when the tide is lower, and Foveaux Shags occur in the entrance channel.

Southern NZ Dotterel are present in this area from about February to July. They can sometimes be seen at the southern end of the Tiwai Point bridge. Access is along the Tiwai Bridge sand/gravel spit. Park under the pylons and walk to the end of the spit. Another option is to drive east along Awarua Bay Road to the car parking area at Muddy Creek and then walk around the eastern end of the bay to visit feeding and roosting areas there. The drive can take 15-20 minutes and a vehicle with high clearance is needed as some parts of the road are quite rough with some potholes. Be prepared for wet feet and some knee-deep wading, depending on the time of tide.

In addition to the regular Arctic breeding waders already mentioned and endemic waders such as Wrybill and Banded Dotterel, rarities here have included Little Whimbrel, Grey-tailed Tattler, Greater Sand Plover, Lesser Sand Plover, Terek Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Hudsonian Godwit, Sanderling, Red-necked Stint, Red-necked Phalarope, Australasian Bittern, Antarctic Tern, Australian Gull-billed Tern, Whiskered Tern, and White-winged Black Tern.

Other species present can include Black-billed Gull, Black-fronted Tern, and White-fronted Tern. Moulting Yellow-eyed Penguins, Tawaki, or Snares Crested Penguins are also possible on the coast here, even near the Bluff ferry terminal.

Contact Regional Representative Phil Rhodes for details of future Southland wader surveys: [p.rhodes@xtra.co.nz](mailto:p.rhodes@xtra.co.nz)

Michael Szabo is editor of *Birds New Zealand* magazine.



Black Tern in non-breeding plumage, Plimmerton, 1/2/22: Michael Szabo.



Whiskered Tern in breeding plumage, Awarua Bay, 31/1/22: Bradley Shields.



White-Winged Black Tern in non-breeding plumage, Clive, 27/1/22: John Kyngdon.



Little Tern in non-breeding plumage, Waikanae sandspit (22/3/22): Michael Szabo.

## 2022 is the Year of the Terns

2022 has been designated the “Year of the Terns” by the East Asian–Australasian Flyway Partnership Program. The Program’s Seabird Working Group made the declaration at the 49th Annual Pacific Seabird Group Meeting on 22nd February 2022 and is running a promotional campaign to help raise awareness of seabirds and promote collaboration on studies and conservation of seabirds within the flyway, using terns as the theme group.

“Many species are experiencing population declines that are difficult to detect given the months they remain away from global eyes,” according to the campaign. “We unfortunately still have relatively little understanding of seabirds in the EAA Flyway regions. Therefore, the Secretariat and Seabird Working Group decided to focus on promoting seabirds this year, and hope to generate more collaboration and strengthen seabird conservation in the EAA Flyway.”

The declaration was timely given that an unprecedented number of tern and noddy species have been recorded on the New Zealand ‘mainland’ this past summer and into autumn, in addition to our resident tern species (White-fronted, Black-fronted, NZ Fairy, Caspian).

The most notable reports were first NZ records of Black Tern and Black-naped Tern, and a first NZ live record of Bridled Tern. The others were Sooty, White-winged Black, Whiskered, Arctic, Australian Gull-billed, Common, Little, Arctic, Black Noddy, Brown Noddy, and Grey Ternlet.

Each of these species is illustrated here to help members identify any unusual terns that may be seen while birdwatching or atlasing. If you see any rare or unusual terns please submit an Unusual Bird Report to the Rarities Appraisal Committee and

report them via the eBird NZ Bird Atlas portal, with photographs if possible. If you are unsure of an identification, you can visit the NZ Birds Online website to look at the various tern species photos there, or you can post a photo to the “New Zealand Birders” Facebook group with a request for an identification.

The recent run of unusual tern and noddy observations on the mainland also highlights the usefulness of having a good quality camera with a zoom lens capable of taking good quality photographs of unusual terns among White-fronted and Black-fronted Tern flocks to assist with their identification. The Black Tern first seen at Waikanae sandspit was only reported because a keen photographer took a photo of it and posted it to a Facebook group asking for an identification. Some other vagrant tern species to bear in mind while in the field or on the water looking at tern flocks include Antarctic Tern, White Tern, Crested Tern, Lesser Crested Tern, Roseate Tern, and Grey-backed Tern.

MICHAEL SZABO, EDITOR



Grey Ternlet, The Sugarloaf, Poor Knights Islands (10/1/22): Michael Szabo.





▲ Australian Gull-billed Tern in breeding plumage, Motueka Spit, 5/3/22: Adam Colley.



▲ Bridled Tern in breeding plumage, 90 Mile Beach Bluff Reserve, 13/2/22: Dave Howes.



▲ Black-naped Tern adult in moult, Muriwai gannet colony, 13/2/22: Hayden Pye.



▲ Sooty Tern in breeding plumage, Plimmerton, 7/2/22: Michael Szabo.



▲ Arctic Tern, immature bird, Waikanae sandspit, 28/4/22: Michael Szabo.



▲ Black Noddy in breeding plumage with White-fronted Terns, Bluff Reserve on 90 Mile Beach, 13/2/22: Scott Brooks.



▲ Common Tern in breeding plumage with non-breeding White-fronted Tern, Plimmerton, 22/3/22: Michael Szabo.



▲ A Brown Noddy was seen flying past Muriwai gannet colony quite far offshore by Lucy Dean on 13/2/22. This photo shows one in breeding plumage at the Kermadec Islands: Scott Brooks.



▲ Tawaki penguins on the West Coast: Doug Gimesy/NZ Birds Online.



▲ Black-fronted Tern with GPS device on its back: Adrian Patterson.

## Impact of Stoats on Tawaki breeding success

Supported by funding from the 2019 Birds New Zealand Research Fund, the West Coast Penguin Trust (WCPT) studied whether Tawaki/Fiordland Crested Penguin breeding success was influenced negatively by the presence of Stoats during the 2020 breeding season. In previous seasons (2014-19), WCPT found that Stoats can prey-switch from rodents and instead feed on Tawaki eggs and chicks, particularly in a season following a beech mast event.

The 2020 season followed a 2019 South Westland beech mast event and, if unmanaged, there was a risk that large numbers of Stoats could result in a devastating impact on Tawaki breeding success, as they did at Jackson Head in 2016. The season was chosen for intensive study to maximise the opportunity to learn from that event, comparing three different levels of predator control.

Stoat detection tools (camera traps, tracking tunnels) were located within and around three South Westland Tawaki colonies, and Tawaki nests were monitored with trail cameras to measure the effectiveness of each Stoat management regime: 1) Gorge River without predator control; 2) Jackson Head with a community predator trapping project; and 3) Moeraki with landscape scale predator control by the Department of Conservation.

WCPT Tawaki rangers measured breeding success at each colony, Stoat presence within and near Tawaki colonies, and nest visitation rates by Stoats. The expected Stoat population explosions did not eventuate, although Stoats were detected in all three colonies.

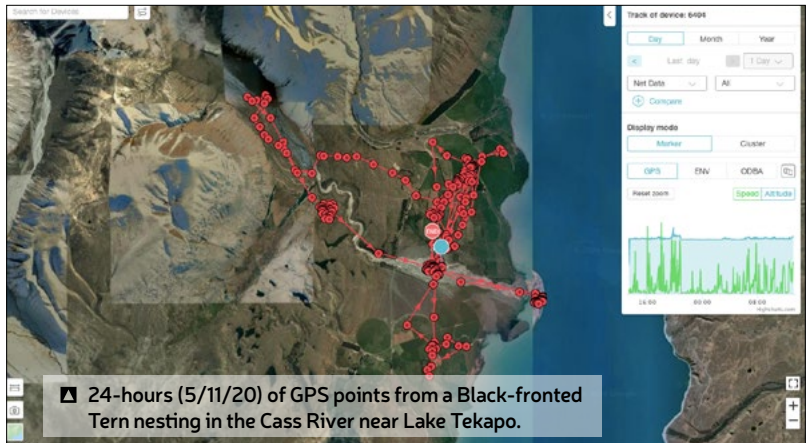
All three sites had good breeding success to crèching of between 0.83 and 1.00 (nests that raised one chick/total nests monitored) and nest failure may have been due to natural causes. It appears that Stoats did not need to prey-switch from rodents to Tawaki eggs or chicks due to rodents remaining common.

Analysis of the data is continuing but we can conclude that the species to watch and understand is the Stoat, and that it is important to understand the surrounding environment, particularly the timing and local severity of beech mast events in relation to Stoat population dynamics and interactions between Stoats and their prey species.

WCPT is advocating for an extension to a key predator control block to include the largest known Tawaki breeding colony of circa 400 nests across 5km of coastline, and is proposing (and will support) an increase in the community trapping programme at Jackson Head.

If successful, this would bring circa 60-70% of South Westland breeding Tawaki under a form of Stoat management, which is expected to add to their overall breeding success in South Westland.

WEST COAST PENGUIN TRUST



▲ 24-hours (5/11/20) of GPS points from a Black-fronted Tern nesting in the Cass River near Lake Tekapo.

## Movements of Black-fronted Terns

The Black-fronted Tern or Tarapirohe is a nationally endangered endemic species. They are frequently seen in braided rivers around the South Island, but we have little idea of how they spend their days. In November and December 2020, 34 Black-fronted Terns were caught using drop-traps in colonies in the Ohau and Cass Rivers in the Mackenzie Basin. Each tern was fitted with a GPS device (Druid Technologies, China) that uses a Bluetooth/cellphone network system to upload their data, all while weighing less than 3% of an adult Black-fronted Tern.

Receiving units were placed by both colonies to capture data from the devices and transmit to an online data centre. The GPS devices transmitted data during the Black-fronted Tern breeding season until the birds stopped returning to their colonies and moved out of range of the receiving units. The terns were banded and three underwing pin feathers were collected from each bird to use DNA to determine the sex of the individuals.

Black-fronted Terns transmitted data for between two and 94 days before leaving their colonies. During this time they entered 23 different habitats, with the most frequented habitats being high-producing exotic grassland, depleted grassland, gravel/rock, river, and lake/pond. DNA analysis revealed that of the 34 birds captured, 15 were female and 19 were male. During winter 2021, the receiving units were taken to the Canterbury coastline to try to relocate terns with GPS devices but none were able to be located.

In September 2021, Black-fronted Terns began arriving back at their breeding colonies where they could reconnect with the returned receiving devices. Ten GPS devices were detected on returning birds, however limited data was able to be collected – likely due to feathers growing over a device's solar panels. The dataset is still being analysed and on completion will hopefully bring results that can be used to make a meaningful difference to Black-fronted Tern conservation. My thanks to the Department of Conservation, Birds New Zealand, Forest and Bird, and Lincoln University for their ongoing support for this research.

FRASER GURNEY



■ Guided walk at Ambury Regional Park: Denise Poyner.



■ Spotting scopes and cameras at the ready, Ambury Regional Park: Stefan Marks

### FAR NORTH

We organised two field trips travelling 30km along 90 Mile Beach this quarter. In early April there was almost constant easterly winds. Then, on 11/4, we saw many more White-fronted Terns than usual (423), as well as 680 Southern Black-backed Gulls, 690 SIPO, 194 Red-billed Gulls, 1 NZ Dotterel and 3 Banded Dotterels. We saw fewer birds on our next trip on 10/5, recording 531 Sth Black-backed Gulls, 112 Red-billed Gulls, 552 SIPO, 1 Wrybill, 5 NZ Dotterels, plus 13 other species. We have seen very few beach wrecked dead seabirds this year but on 10/5 there were 62 dead Little Penguins on 90 Mile Beach plus 2 seen struggling up the beach.

We also visited Unahi Wharf where we counted 450 Royal Spoonbills standing on the *Macrocarpus*. Kevin Matthews has reported lower numbers of ducks than usual in the Far North, which he thinks is possibly due to botulism. – ISABELLA GODBERT

### NORTHLAND

Cathy Mitchell spoke at our February meeting on the translocation of White-faced Storm Petrels from South East Island to Mana Island, which was a collaboration between DOC and different volunteer groups with iwi and hapu. She gave a fascinating overview about Mana Island and translocation procedures. The target number of birds was 350 over a 3-year period from 2019 to 2021. There was a 98% fledging rate and they are now waiting to see if these birds return and breed.

We had our AGM in March and then at our April meeting Jo Skyrme, resident ranger from Matakohē-Limestone Island, updated us on the latest numbers of kiwi, Fernbird, and Banded Rail there. She also told us about the 9 native skink and gecko species now resident there.

The most interesting results from the February survey around Whangarei Harbour were reports of 14 Ruddy Turnstones at Waipu and 526 White-fronted

Terns at Parua Bay. The number of Red Knot in Whangarei Harbour was similar to last year (c.430) but only 7% of previous counts 20 years ago.

On 10/4 there were 150 godwits roosting at Whangarei Airport. This was the first record of godwits roosting there in 20 years. The number of Wrybill continues to decline in the harbour with a maximum of 24 seen at the airport on the same day. In February, the shorebirds were again counted along the Ngunguru Estuary. Eight enthusiastic observers recorded 17 species including 45 Bar-tailed Godwits, 6 Caspian Terns, 42 NZ Dotterels, 44 VOCs, and a Whimbrel.

– ILSE CORKERY

### AUCKLAND

Seabird disorientation caused by bright artificial lights is increasingly being noticed in the Auckland region. From February to May, a total of 150 Cook's Petrel were found grounded around Auckland City and admitted into BirdCare Aotearoa for care before being safely released. The number of birds found is increasing on the data from previous years and while this may be an indication of greater breeding success on Hauturu/Little Barrier Island, it may only be a fraction of a much larger number of seabirds being disoriented by bright artificial lights. Many people often mistake petrels for pigeons so we expect that many Cook's Petrels go unnoticed, falling prey to predators or being run over on roads. Greater public awareness and reporting will hopefully provide a better indication on the severity of this issue.

Muriwai gannet colony and Muriwai Beach featured in a record number of vagrant tern species that arrived in the country during February and March. A Brown Noddy was seen offshore at Muriwai Gannet Colony on the 13/2 by Lucy Dean. A Black-naped Tern was found moribund at the colony by Hayden Pye the same day, and was the first NZ record of this species. Unfortunately, the bird passed away during

the night. Fortunately, the bird's body was recovered the next day by Paul G and taken to the Auckland Museum. A trifecta of species was a beach-wrecked Bridled Tern found by Kamya Patel on Muriwai Beach on 26/3. This was the third NZ record of a Bridled Tern and only the second to be found beach-wrecked.

Beach patrols have recorded a relatively small number of birds along Muriwai Beach. Birds found included a Black Petrel (9/4) and 4 Little Penguins (7/5). Larger numbers of birds were found on east coast patrols. A one-off beach patrol of Mangawhai Spit on 5/3 found 39 birds of 12 species including 12 Australasian Gannets, 5 Fluttering Shearwaters, 3 Buller's Shearwaters and 1 Kaka. Our Pakiri Beach Patrol on 15/3 found 36 birds of 12 species including: 17 Little Penguins, 3 Common Diving Petrel, 1 White-faced Storm Petrel, 1 Black Petrel, 1 Grey-faced Petrel, 3 Tui and 1 Kaka.

Recent activities included an Ambury Park Guided Bird Walk on the 20/3. A total of 33 people attended and the birding highlights included 600 Red Knot, 350 Wrybill, 1 Grey-tailed Tattler and an impressive feeding flock of 75 Little Black Shags. The annual South Kaipara Lake NZ Dabchick Survey took place on 25/4 in association with South Kaipara Landcare. The numbers of NZ Dabchick seen were lower than usual with just 7 plus 4 Australasian Little Grebes. These lower numbers may be due to the very dry summer. Other birds seen included 1 Australasian Bittern and 30 Grey Duck.

Local sightings include a good number of international vagrant shorebirds. Most impressive was a Western Sandpiper found at Whangateau by Marie-Louise Ward on 15/3. A Red-necked Stint and a Sanderling were seen at Mangawhai during a Nth NZ dotterel post-breeding flock count on 5/5, and a Hudsonian Godwit in breeding plumage was seen at Ambury Park on 30/4 by Harry Boorman, which may be the same bird that overwintered there in 2021.

– IAN McLEAN



▣ The Nelson Branch is banding Fernbirds at Whangapeka Flats: Paul Fisher.



▣ Whanganui Branch members gathered to 'Farewell the Godwits' at Whanganui Estuary (25/3/22): Paul Gibson.

**SOUTH AUCKLAND**

At our March meeting, Dr Brian Gill spoke about the bird count study he did at Western Springs Lake, Auckland, in 2012 and 2014. Mallard, Sth Black-backed Gull and feral geese made up 63% of the waterbirds present. Among other species NZ Scaup, Eurasian Coot and 3 shag species also breed there. He made some comparisons to data from other freshwater lakes in NZ and overseas and found that 61 birds/hectare at Western Springs is a very high density by international standards.

In April, Ariel Micaiah-Heswall spoke about her PhD research studying the sensory features of seabirds in the Hauraki Gulf. The results suggest that species with the largest overall body size, longer protruding body parts, and relatively more sensitive sensory systems in terms of smell and sight are likely at higher risk of becoming fisheries bycatch.

A beach patrol at Karioitahi in late March found 1 juvenile Sth Black-backed Gull, 1 Pied Shag, 1 Canada Goose, and 1 Cook's Petrel. Regarding future beach patrols, we have reached the decision that given the generally terrible sand conditions caused by traffic on the beach, we will only undertake patrols following bad weather on the west coast.

Interesting sightings from February to April include a Western Sandpiper at Whitford, 14 Little Tern at Seagrove, and a Brown Quail at Mauku. A new pair of Kokako has been seen in the Hunuas, and Kaka have been seen regularly around Kohekohe, with other sightings at Redhill, Oputere Beach, Stony Bay, and Hikutaia. Australasian Bittern were reported at Karaka, Kohekohe, Whangapoua, Awaiti, Ngatea, and near Waitakaruru. 15 Cattle Egret were seen at Otatau, and 4 near Pararekau Island.

On 16/4, Ian Southey and Tony Habraken joined forces with Helen Smith to monitor NZ Fairy Terns on the Kaipara Harbour, and managed to record the coloured leg bands for 36 of the 38 known birds. A godwit banded in Queensland was found at Port Waikato, as well as a Banded Dotterel with a transmitter attached in Kaikoura. Another Banded

Dotterel banded at Kaikoura was seen at Seagrove. - SUE FROSTICK

**WAIKATO**

Our indoor meetings had to be cancelled during the previous quarter due to Covid restrictions. Hamilton Lake surveys occasionally throw up a surprise and March was no exception with a NZ Dabchick and a Royal Spoonbill. In April there were circa 500 Canada Geese there.

Russell Cannings reports a Black-fronted Tern and a Pomarine Skua at Awakino in mid-March, and a Fernbird at Omaru Falls (King Country) which was a reminder that there are still scattered remnant populations of Fernbirds in rural districts. Other reports included Rooks at Paeroa and Matangi, 3 Black-fronted Dotterels at Kaiaua, a Common Tern at Cathedral Cove east of Whitianga, another Black-fronted Tern at Hot Water Beach south-east of Whitianga, and both Marsh and Spotless Crane heard at a small raupo pond near Piopio.

Our last quarterly update reported that Royal Spoonbills were nesting at Te Aroha wetlands. Sadly, they were not successful due to storm damage. - KEN WEDGEWOOD

**TARANAKI**

At our April meeting a sub-committee was formed for the purpose of organising the Society's 2023 AGM. Keith Woodley arrived here in late April. A visit was paid to the proposed 2023 AGM venue and some details finalised. A sub-committee meeting was held, tasks allocated, and we are now 'under way'.

For our April field trip, our Atlas coordinator Steve Purdon had 2 groups of us touring some grid squares around coastal and inland south Taranaki. Nothing of great importance was seen but squares lacking time/data were covered. A total of 5,300 checklists have been submitted so far, 91% of our region's squares have some data, and 96 species have been recorded by 108 atlasers.

Pied Shags are settling in around north Taranaki and gradually moving south, 10 Royal Spoonbills were at the Urenui River

Estuary, a couple at Waiongana, and 1 on a beach in the middle of New Plymouth. Three Pacific Golden Plovers were seen at Tongaporutu River Estuary, quite a rare find here.

There was a reliable report of a pair of Kaka seen in a bamboo grove in town. At Waiongana an Australasian Bittern was at a small lagoon by the beach and a pair of NZ Pipits was on the beach, a first record of these 2 species there in 30 years.

Steve McGill reports he has seen shearwaters, Common Diving Petrel, 1 storm petrel, 1 White-capped Albatross, and 6 Little Penguins at sea. Common Mynas have arrived at the Cockerams' property. David has been following their progress up the road there and after 2 years have now reached their place. A flock of 20 or so were seen around their new chook run.

A Reef Heron was seen on the western end of the coastal walkway. A Mute Swan seen at Waiaua Lake in Opunake was a rarity for Taranaki. Sacred Kingfishers are back on the coast with 12 seen at the Waiaua Lake and 6 at Urenui River Estuary.

Our May field trip was a morning ramble around Barrett Lagoon. Tui were most numerous in the flowering coastal banksia and there were 6 Kereru. On the lagoon there were 16 coots and a pair of Australasian Shoveler (uncommon in Taranaki), 2 NZ Dabchicks, assorted duck spp, and a Pied Shag. Unfortunately, the Kaka seen the day before chose not to show itself, although some suspicious parrot noises were heard. - PETER FRYER

**HAWKE'S BAY**

Three of us visited Lake Lopez and Mohi Bush for our February field trip. Lake Lopez yielded 12 species, with Eurasian Coot chicks, Australasian Shoveler ducklings, NZ Dabchicks/Weweia and NZ Scaup/Papango being highlights. At Mohi Bush, our youngest participant heard Rifleman/ Titipounamu. We saw 4 Eastern Rosellas, North Island Robins/Toutouwai, as well as the usual bush birds there. Sadly, our planned March and April field trips had to be cancelled.



Members continued to report interesting sightings. The scrapes at Ahuriri Estuary/Te Whanganui-a-Orotū continued to provide shorebirds in spades, with the usual Bar-tailed Godwits/Kuaka (up to c.220), Whimbrel, Pacific Golden Plovers (up to 13), NZ Dotterels/Tūturiwhatu (up to 10), and a couple of Wrybills/Ngutuparore hanging around through March and into April. A good-sized group of 13 Caspian Terns/Taranui was seen at the Tukituki Rivermouth, and circa 100 White-fronted Terns/Tara were seen at various places around the harbour.

A Little Tern was seen at Haumoana in early April and at Waitangi in early May, and a White-winged Black Tern was seen at Waitangi off and on for several weeks through April into early May. An immature NZ Falcon/Kārearea was spotted in central Hastings on 2/4, sitting atop the council building by the Hastings Library, and 2 Kākā were seen spending a day in the vicinity of Ball's Clearing—the first ones seen there since the very early 1950s!

– THALIA SACHTLEBEN

#### WHANGANUI

The saga of Whanganui's flagged Bar-tailed Godwit, AJD, continues. Inspired by his story, described by Paul Gibson in *Feats Beyond Amazing. The Life Story of a Bar-tailed Godwit*, 18 people turned up on a cold, windy afternoon in late March hoping to see AJD depart for his breeding grounds, somewhere north of the Brooks Range in Arctic Alaska. Phil Battley, NZ's premier 'godwitologist', says that small, brick-red male godwits such as AJD, departing in late March, are thought to breed furthest north, where the thaw comes later.

In previous years, AJD has always left around 25/3, and the same was expected to happen this year. It didn't. AJD was last seen a week earlier, just before an upsurge in godwit departures from here. No one saw AJD leave, but the coincidence with these other departures, about a week earlier than normal, suggests that he may have left around then. He was certainly in prime condition, as Paul's near-daily photographs showed. Searches for him, on our local estuaries and Manawatū estuary proved unsuccessful.

Despite being told that he may have already migrated, 18 hardy souls still turned up 'just in case'. They saw the few remaining godwits and heard Paul's short impromptu talk about AJD. They were each rewarded with a photograph of AJD, taken a week earlier and signed by Paul.

This interest in AJD led to more frequent sightings of other species on the Whanganui estuary, especially Royal Spoonbills. Up to 10 birds had been present through late summer, occasionally spiking to 12–22 birds. But from early April onwards for about 3 weeks, several larger flocks, including 1 of 70 birds, were recorded moving through, arriving from the south-east then departing soon after, north-west up the coast. A similar pattern has been noticed in previous years, suggesting that April is a peak time for their

migration to their wintering grounds further north.

In early March, 5 of us went up the Whanganui River to Pipiriki and back by jet boat, hoping to find Nankeen Night Herons and Black-fronted Dotterels. We saw 5 night herons at Kemp's Pole, and 1 near Parakino, but others known to be present were not flushed by the boat. Two Black-fronted Dotterel were seen near Parakino, confirming this species' ongoing westward spread. The café at Upokongaro remains the best place to see night herons, with up to 5 birds currently roosting in the trees behind the café.

– PETER FROST

#### WELLINGTON

Rare terns continue to be found on the coast of Whanganui-a-tara / Wellington and up the Kapiti Coast. Several Common Terns have been found at Island Bay Marine Reserve, Plimmerton fire station rocks, and Waikanae sandspit. Even more unusual was a White-winged Black Tern found at Waikanae sandspit. The rarest tern recorded this quarter, however, was an immature Arctic Tern, found – yet again – at the Waikanae tern hotspot in late April! Let's hope more rare terns turn up, as members and non-members continue to scrutinise local tern flocks!

We discussed these sightings among others at our monthly Zoom meetings, which are now also available to view via YouTube as recordings for those interested. We also discussed the first results of the Pāuatahanui Inlet surveys. We are now conducting these surveys for the fifth decade, so there were plenty of interesting trends to discuss, including the rising and falling in abundance of various shag species. Please consider helping out with this great Birds New Zealand initiative. You can contact Ian Armitage through [ian.armitage@xtra.co.nz](mailto:ian.armitage@xtra.co.nz) for more information.

We also enjoyed various very high quality talks during our monthly meetings, including several by Colin Miskelly on historic images and wanderings around Rakiura / Stewart Island, and an update from the DOC banding office from Annemieke Hendriks. As Wellington Regional Representative, I can truly say our region is blessed with great birds and birders alike!

– JOHANNES FISCHER

#### MARLBOROUGH

A Chestnut Teal found at Grovetown Lagoons is the first record of this species for the Atlas. First spotted by Bill Cash on 24/3 it is still present in May. Here's hoping local duck shooters don't get it!

Our region is at 81.62% of all its grid squares having data in them for the collective Autumn season, which is a great increase after the national lockdowns restricted birding movements last year. We've all enjoyed being able to get into some harder to reach spots for Atlasing data, including the Richmond Ranges, Chalk Range, and along the Waima River. The latter

had a pair of Black-fronted Dotterel so it will be interesting to see if they're still there in spring.

There were 4 Banded Rail/Mioweka at Shakespeare Bay in early March, which is the highest count here so far and indicative of a potential local breeding site. Plenty more nocturnal counts are needed for much of our region, which will be a priority as we dive into the winter months. – DAN BURGIN

#### NELSON

Autumn has come, the godwits, knots and turnstones long departed. Bon voyage long distance flyers! Our regular meetings are back on at Richmond Library. New members this year include Wayne Hennessy, Serge and Charlotte Crottaz, and Alison Balance. Alison is a wildlife documentary film maker who – after telling more than 1,000 stories as the voice of RNZ's science, environment and nature programme Our Changing World – has finally hung up her boots ... or has she? She can now be seen on Rabbit Island in Nelson with the oystercatcher banding team helping out David Melville and crew.

Our March meeting consisted of mainly short reports: Alison on a wader cannon-netting trip to Rabbit Island on 16/2, Rebecca Bowater showed her excellent photos of waders taken at Motueka Spit, an atlasing update from Robin Toy, and a Fernbird report from Paul Fisher.

Our April meeting featured a talk by Peter Gaze and his conservation project on Puangi Island in Marlborough Sounds. This highlighted steps to remove pest species and reintroduce Tuatara, various geckos, SI Robin, Orange-fronted Parakeets, and Takaha.

Rebecca Bowater reported carting her camera gear from Flora Saddle to the Gridiron Hut along the Whangapeka River where she took photographs of a beautiful pair of Whio that she shared with us. Paul Bennett has taken on the arduous role of editor of our 'Torea Pango' branch newsletter and has produced 2 issues so far this year. Well done, Paul.

The Fernbird banding project that our branch participates in at Wakapuaka Flats has received high praise from Nelson City Council: "Thank you for sending in your Accountability Report, I loved seeing the beautiful birds that you are monitoring. I can't say that I've seen a Fernbird before. Scott has said that it was one of the best Accountability Reports that he's seen and that there was some great data in it. He is happy with the report ... Have a great day. Nga mihi nui. Jane Moran. Administrator for the Nelson Nature Team."

– PAUL GRIFFITHS

#### CANTERBURY

In mid-February, 2 White-winged Black Terns were reported around Crescent Island, Lake Ellesmere. Early the following month, the Waihora Ellesmere Trust's annual all-bird survey was conducted at the lake. As always, this provided a good opportunity to see which birds were around. A minimum of



▲ A pair of Whio on the Whangapeka River: Rebecca Bowater.



▲ Marsh Crake among raupō: Donald Snook/NZ Birds Online.

11 Sharp-tailed Sandpipers were seen around the lake during the count. Two Australasian Bitterns were also seen, 1 in the Selwyn Huts area and 1 at Doyleston. Another interesting sighting was a Glossy Ibis that was spotted at Yarrs Bay, although it did not appear to remain in the area for long afterwards. Marsh and Spotless Crakes continue to be seen at Harts Creek, although they were not reported during the count.

Elsewhere, an Eastern Rockhopper Penguin was reported moulting near the Ashburton River Mouth area in late February. However, it appeared to remain at the site only for a few days. In mid-March, a NZ Falcon was spotted flying in the area surrounding Halswell Quarry. While falcons have been seen flying over the quarry in the past, they are no ordinary sight in the area. In late April, a census conducted by the city council of the wider area around the Avon-Heathcote Estuary identified 41 Little Black Shags seen all together at 1 location – an excellent record for the Christchurch area, which has a relatively small population of this species. Further north, a male Northern Shoveler was spotted in late April at Pegasus Wetlands and continues to be seen there. Interestingly, this is the same area where 1 was present last year. – ELEANOR GUNBY

#### OTAGO

Autumn has taken hold and Otago members are as busy as ever. Atlas trips visited Motatapu Station, Wānaka (by invite) for an autumn count, and a successful day trip to the Catlins area took place where forest, pastureland, and seabirds were all recorded – making for an impressive species list. There was no early May Atlas trip with expeditions planned for Global Big Day on the 13th instead. Otago's Atlas autumn coverage currently sits at 75.8% of Otago squares having some coverage, with 117 species recorded. A total of 137 people have submitted 4,554 autumn lists as we are part way through the scheme's second autumn.

Several interesting bird sightings have been made which include: a high count of 53

Great Crested Grebe at Lake Hayes on 12/4 is overshadowed by John Darby's count ("I think the highest count yet") of 224 (123 adults, 101 juveniles) on 3/4. Other high counts included 185 Spur-winged Plover at Teviot, Clutha, and flocks of European finches with 200 and 250 Lesser Redpoll, and 180 and 350 Greenfinch. Marsh Crake continued to be recorded at Tomahawk Lagoon and Lake Dunstan, and a White Heron was at Tomahawk Lagoon and Katiki.

Australasian Bittern were recorded 3 times, in the Manuherikia (Central Otago), Waitati, and Tautuku Catlins. A Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and Ruddy Turnstone were present at Aramoana and 17 Pied Shag were seen at Waitati. Our Regional Recorder commented on a Tui responding to a Morepork with "ruru" and a fresh dead Long-tailed Cuckoo was found in North Dunedin (too late to make an Atlas record).

The Dunedin town belt bird count sites were officially launched on the 10/4 (some years after counting by members began) and the 10 count sites have been marked with engaging signage. The launch involved several local members, representatives from Predator Free Dunedin and the local Mayor. This got good coverage in the newspaper and community council news. This has increased the number of people submitting counts beyond our membership, with only 5 of the 30 plus recently submitted counts being from Society members.

The Dunedin Branch once again organised a Tomahawk Lagoon birdwatching event as part of the Ōtepoti Mohoau/Wild Dunedin Festival, which attracted 35 participants. Our indoor meetings have been a combination of in-person and online events enabling as many people as possible to attend in these careful Covid times.

– FRANCESCA CUNNINGHAME

#### SOUTHLAND

Our Regional Representative Neil Robertson recently decided it was time to step down from the position after taking on the role in 2014. Neil did a wonderful job and was

a great mentor to myself and many other members over the years.

One of the highlights of birding with Neil was when a group of four of us broke the Southland 24-hour birding record. It was one of my personal birding highlights. We wish Neil all the best for the future and again a big thank you to him for looking after the Southland Branch for all those years. In the interim Peter McClelland and I have taken over as joint RRs.

On the birding front, a Chestnut-breasted Shelduck was still present at the Sutton Lagoon on 13/4, a Little Tern duo was seen by Pete McClelland at Awarua Bay on 21/2, and there was also a singleton at Jock's Roost on 27/3. A Royal Penguin was seen by many visitors to Stewart Island as the bird chose Paterson Inlet to sit through its annual moult.

Marsh Crake, a species rarely reported in Southland in previous years, is seen frequently in Sutton lagoon and other parts of the New River Estuary, although it is still a great thrill to see these birds.

As well as the resident Grey-tailed Tattler at Riverton Estuary (23/3) we also have another that is seen on a semi-regular basis at Jock's Roost on the New River Estuary, reported recently on 27/3. Other species seen at Jock's Roost on the same date were 5 Wrybill, 1 Pectoral Sandpiper, and 63 Pacific Golden Plover.

After a long absence a White Heron finally showed up at the Sutton Lagoon on 29/3 but it didn't hang around long, much to the dismay of birders who missed out on seeing it.

It was interesting to receive a report via eBird of 4 Red-crowned Kakariki flying close to Mores Reserve at Riverton on 11/4. A singleton was also seen a few days later on 15/4. This species has now also been reported from Bluff Hill, Otaua Reserve, and Otatara where they seem to be breeding in good numbers. Finally, a flock of over 60 Royal Spoonbill were seen roosting on the Oreti River near Sandy Point on 30/3.

– PHIL RHODES



▣ Whimbrel and Bar-tailed Godwits, Ngunguru: Scott Brooks.



▣ Western Sandpiper, Whitford (23/2/22): Michael Szabo.

## National Wader Census – Summer 2021

A total of 122,016 waders of 24 species were counted during the November-December 2021 wader census. This was the lowest count since full coverage was reinstated in 2006 and can be mostly explained by poorer coverage than usual in certain areas, due to lack of personnel, Covid restrictions, weather conditions, lack of boats etc. Important areas not covered included the Far North, north Kaipara, and the Waikato harbours.

These areas would normally hold at least 13,000 waders, which would put the number more in line with the usual totals. Some smaller areas along Auckland's east coast are much better covered and although numbers at each site may not be that high, these counts show the importance of small sites, particularly for Bar-tailed Godwit, SIPO and VOC, and NZ Dotterel. One region not often covered is Coromandel, which is particularly good for these species, so it would be good to see these sites counted more frequently.

Drawing comparisons between the summer 2021 count with the 2020 count is not helpful bearing in mind the reduced site coverage in 2021. Bar-tailed Godwit numbers were down to 65,859 and even adding an estimated 4,000 to 5,000 missing from key uncounted sites this would still be the lowest count since 2006. The Red Knot count of 27,060 is up from 25,698 in 2020. The only Red Knot sites not counted in 2021 were three Far North harbours, so Red Knot numbers may have stabilised a little. Strongholds for Red Knots continue to be Farewell Spit (8,751), Manukau Harbour (7,834), Kaipara Harbour (5,862), Firth of Thames (2,850) and Tasman Bay (932), which together account for 97% of all the Red Knots counted.

Ruddy Turnstone numbers were down again from 1,688 in 2020 to 1,309 in 2021. The strongholds for Ruddy Turnstone were Kaipara Harbour (324), Manukau Harbour (305), Tasman Bay (240), Southland (194) and Farewell Spit (158). Red-necked Stint numbers were down to 53 and still well down on historical numbers. This summer slightly more Pacific Golden Plover were counted with 156, compared to 122 in summer 2020. Only 27 Whimbrels were counted, down from 47 in 2020, and the only other Arctic wader species to reach double figures was Red-necked Stint with 18 individuals counted. Uncommon summer waders included 5 Greater Sand Plover, 4 Eastern Curlew, 3 Sanderling, 2 Curlew Sandpiper, 2 Terek Sandpiper, 1 Pectoral Sandpiper, and 1 Grey-tailed Tattler.

NATIONAL WADER CENSUS COORDINATOR, ADRIAN RIEGEN

## Seabirds: The New Identification Guide by Peter Harrison, Martin Perrow & Hans Larsson Lynx Edicions RRP: \$125

This comprehensive new 600 page 156 x 235mm hard cover guide to the world's 433 seabird species

covers 378 seabirds (gulls, terns, noddies, skuas, tropicbirds, penguins, albatrosses, petrels, storm petrels, diving petrels, prions, shearwaters, frigatebirds, gannets, boobies, shags, pelicans) plus 55 seaducks, grebes, loons, and phalaropes.

Weighing in at 1.7kg, it contains 239 colour plates with facing-plate texts and range maps with more than 3,800 colour illustrations of distinct subspecies, sexes, ages, and colour morphs, with identification keys and figures. Concise texts cover identification, geographic ranges, movements and migrations, breeding biology and feeding habits, conservation status, and many of the latest taxonomic treatments, including several recently described or rediscovered species.

A staggering 145 (40%) of the species covered here occur in New Zealand or its offshore islands, and most breed here. The terns, noddies, gulls, and skuas sections runs to 171 pages. The plates painted by Hans Larsson stand out for their impressive level of detail and accuracy. His fine-grained style gives these birds more 'depth' compared with Peter Harrison's rather plain style of painting the tubenoses, auks, shags, and pelicans, which appear to my eye to have less depth. In the case of the penguins and albatrosses, some of Harrison's paintings are of a variable standard and a few diminish the overall appeal of the book.

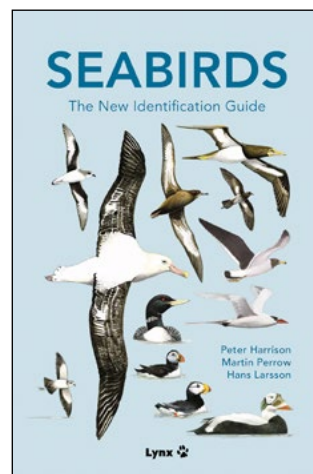
As Robert Flood and Hadoram Shirihai have noted in their review, the tubenoses section runs to 181 pages and forms the least impressive part of the guide. As they put it, Harrison has captured the right shape and jizz of many of these species, but to my eye his paintings do not attain the high standard of illustration set in the Australian Bird Guide (CSIRO Publishing, 2017), in which the tubenose paintings are more detailed and naturalistic, and have greater depth.

Where this new book has something more to offer New Zealand readers is in its greater taxonomic coverage. It includes all tubenoses, penguins, shags, and terns, and has extensive illustrations of the complicated plumages of the frigatebirds and boobies. It includes Antipodean/Gibson's Albatross, Gull-billed/Australian Tern, Tasman/Masked Booby, New Caledonian/NZ Storm Petrel, and Otago/Foveaux Shag each as two species. For some reason it also includes Chatham Skua as a separate species to Subantarctic (Brown) Skua.

Although there is no separate species account for Kermadec Storm Petrel, there is a single illustration of one showing its distinct white rump as part of the White-faced Storm Petrel account. It does not, however, include Northern/Southern Buller's Albatross as two species, nor does it include Whenua Hou Diving Petrel, which is now split from South Georgian Diving Petrel by some authors.

This is a very well-produced and useful reference book suitable for ornithologists and advanced birders with a special interest in the world's seabirds and pelagic birding. If you are new to pelagic birds or birding then a smaller, lighter guide such as Brian Parkinson's *Field Guide to the Seabirds of New Zealand* or Oscar Thomas' *Birds of New Zealand* will perhaps be better suited to your immediate needs.

MICHAEL SZABO, EDITOR





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