

TŌREA PANGO



NELSON BRANCH BIRDS NZ. NEWSLETTER ISSUE 4. SEPT 2022

Summary of last meetings

August 1st

Around 20 people attended the 1st August meeting in the Richmond library- a great turnout.

- The main speaker was George Daly from the TDC who spoke about progress in the Waimea Delta Wetland Enhancement Project jointly funded by the TDC and the Ministry of the Environment. This project has come far since the start of the year, focused on the Pearl Creek area. George spoke about the need to work with the river rather than direct and control it. In particular there was a need to ensure that the project catered for the highly variable water levels, volumes and velocities. Full use has been made of materials already on site and has avoided any obviously artificial lines and construction. The aim has been to create diverse habitats suited to bittern and many other species including inanga and wetland plants. Many thanks to George for a great presentation. Although visibility from the cycleway is (deliberately) limited it is definitely worth a lovely birdy bike ride along the coastal path to take a look for yourself. This is a link to a you tube video giving a short overview: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ua_CHvX2h-0&t=18s



The Pearl Creek area showing new ponds and earthworks (Courtesy TDC)

September 5th

Again, another well attended meeting with around 20 members in the Richmond public library.

- Guest speaker Katherine Chamberlain from Waimārama (Brook) Sanctuary talked about the changing bird numbers following predator fencing and brodifacoum pest control. Waimārama is of course well known to regional members but for those outside our area it is a wildlife sanctuary in Nelson which consists of 690ha of mainly beech and podocarp backing onto the Mt Richmond Forest Park. The excluder fence was completed in 2016 and brodifacoum control undertaken in 2017. Introduced species include tīeke (South Island saddleback) and kakariki karaka (orange fronted

kakariki). Natural populations of many other native species already existed. Katherine talked about the data on population numbers collected by 5-minute bird counts since 2008, giving excellent information on the changing composition of the sanctuary's avifauna following predator control. She also discussed the limitations of this counting method where species hold large territories or move in response to seasonal food sources. In general, as would be hoped, populations of European introductions have declined, with most native species showing increases. Kakariki karaka in particular seem to be doing well, except tieke, possibly due to difficulties in recording numbers.

- Peter Gaze talked about the Birds NZ Nest Record Scheme. There is more about this further on in the Newsletter with the other exciting projects that we have happening.

New Members

Welcome to new member Sharen Graham and also to Frank and Sally Carter (visiting from Napier.)

Next Meetings

A couple of great speakers coming up so keep your diary free!

Ron Moorhouse – October 3rd Meeting

'Riddle solved: why kea numbers plummeted in Nelson Lakes National Park shortly after Elliott & Kemp declared the population 'stable''

In 1999, after nearly a decade of cliff-hanging close-order measurement of kea nest survival rates, Graeme Elliott and Josh Kemp naively concluded that the Nelson Lakes kea population was 'stable' and recommended against expensive predator management for kea conservation. Ten years later, kea numbers in their study area had declined from ten breeding pairs to just three breeding pairs. In a bid to understand reasons why, Kemp et al. (2022) followed 20-30 radio tagged kea through the 2019-2021 predator irruption cascade in unmanaged upland valleys between Nelson Lakes and Arthurs Pass. They witnessed a catastrophic kill-off of 60% of adult kea during 2020 and 2021, as a mast-fuelled mouse plague ended with a crash, suddenly leaving stoats and feral cats with no rodent prey. Kea are essentially ground birds: adults and juveniles of both sexes are vulnerable to ambush during routine ground-foraging and ground-roosting. The invasive carnivores, we surmise, shy away from tackling large pointy parrots when rodent prey is plentiful but become very damaging during hungrier times. We think it likely that kea at Nelson Lakes suffered a similar spate of predation in 2001-2002, just after our earlier study had ended. Interestingly, these studies show that, in contrast to their sympatric congener, the kaka, nesting female kea are not particularly vulnerable to predator attack. On the bright side, radio tracking also shows that kea survival is maintained at >90% per annum by landscape scale aerial 1080 baiting. But are we doing enough to keep kea in these eastern landscapes, or will they retract to persist only in a South Westland stronghold?



Kea (at Natureland!)
Photo; Paul G

Josh Kemp - November 5th Meeting “Restoring kaka to Abel Tasman National Park”.

“The kaka (*Nestor meridionalis*) has become rare or extinct in most of its former range, primarily because of predation on nesting females by stoats. Kaka nest in cavities in the trunks of trees with usually a single entrance making it hard for females to escape a stoat attack. Since 2015 Project Janszoon, DOC, the Abel Tasman Birdsong Trust and local Iwi, have been releasing captive-bred, and in some cases hand-raised, kaka in Abel Tasman National Park as part of a bigger project of improving the Park’s indigenous biodiversity. Released birds were the progeny of the captive South Island kaka population, or eggs and chicks collected from wild source populations and either artificially incubated and hand-raised by humans, or captive foster parents. This talk describes the challenges of returning captive-raised birds to the wild and progress towards the ultimate goal of restoring a viable, self-sustaining kaka population to Abel Tasman.”

Local sightings

Kea –Seen at Riwaka

Falcon— at Marybank

Fluttering Shearwater. Paul Fisher sent this report: ‘When I was out at lunch walking Skipper at the Glen there were hundreds/thousands of fluttering shearwaters feeding in waves, punctuated with spotted shags and Caspian terns. Most of the feeding activity was just north of the Glenduan beach car park within 1km. Would have been an amazing photographic opportunity from boat or kayak. No cetaceans (marine mammals) seen. The movement of birds close to the surface suggested surface feeding on sprats.

National sightings

Not a great deal to report here. However, I will issue a **Disclaimer!**

Sightings reported here are not necessarily confirmed by Birds NZ. I’m just reporting what has been reported. So, no guarantees! The Wilson’s phalarope seen in ‘Blenheim’ and reported, albeit briefly, in ‘rare sightings and alerts’ was a classic example of potential inaccuracy. Hopefully you didn’t spend too long searching for it. There was a Wilson’s phalarope in Blenheim - Blenheim Ontario that is! Still most reports do have substance and are certainly a reason to keep the binoculars close by for an excuse to go for a day’s birding

News from Waimārama (Brook Sanctuary)

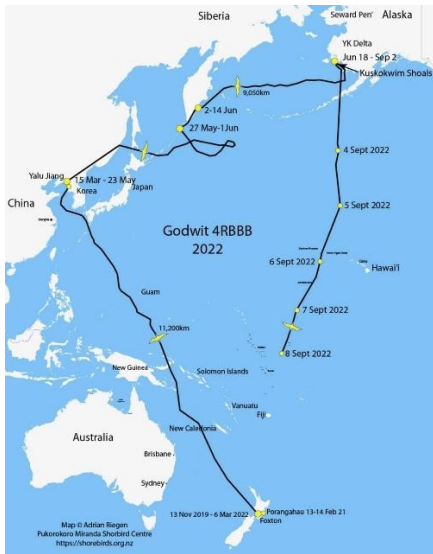
KĀKĀ AVIARY IS COMPLETE! The kākā translocation aviary has now been completed - our thanks to the dedicated efforts of the asset team who built this terrific resource. Our heartfelt thanks also to the Stout Trust, Addo and Ina (deceased) Mulders, Peter Williams and Candy Gillies for funding for this aviary project. While we have formal approval from the Department of Conservation to translocate kākā to the Sanctuary, it will be some time for kākā fledglings with the desired genetic links to Te Taihū (top of the south) region are available for translocation

Invite from Canterbury branch

We have received this email from: **Donald Goodale** <breadman.don@gmail.com> of the Canterbury branch. Basically, it looks like they have booked some cheap accommodation in Kaikoura for the given dates and are offering Nelson members an opportunity to join them for what is always great birding. If interested contact Donald on the above email.

‘We have booked Canterbury Underwater club building October 13-18. We would like to invite anyone from Nelson to join us. You can choose any time to stay, plenty of birding spots and also albatross encounter trip. Cost is \$35 a night and need to bring bedding and kitchen linen etc. Further details later.

Godwits here or on the way!



David Melville reports that godwits are well on their way South including 4RBBB which I'm sure is a bird that some will have affection for. Reports at the last meeting suggest that some birds have already arrived on the Mot sandspit and are looking to be recovering well. Map shows the journey of 4RBBB as of Sept 8th -- on her 8th day of non-stop flight. Hard not to get a tad emotional, eh? (Courtesy of Adrian Riegen from the Miranda Shorebird Centre)

Nelson Branch gets in behind shorebird protection in Golden Bay

Here is a letter written by Paul G, which, along with letters from DOC, Forest and Bird, and Manawhenua ki Mohua, has been forwarded to the TDC supporting Cynthia McConville's proposals to reduce access to motorised vehicles on several significant shorebird sites in Golden Bay. Don't know about you but the sight of someone in a 4WD with a dog running behind hooning along a beach brings out my inner psychopath. So well done Paul and well-done Cynthia!

'Re: Proposal to restrict access to motor vehicles at seabird roosting and nesting sites on Golden Bay Beaches.

I am writing on behalf of the Nelson/Golden Bay Region of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand (OSNZ). The Society is an organisation concerned with the study of birds in New Zealand and the dissemination of this knowledge. The objects of the Society include, 'To assist the conservation and management of birds by providing information, from which sound management decisions can be derived' The Society has been involved in bi-annual winter and spring national surveys of shorebirds along the coastal areas of New Zealand since 1983. In addition, the local Nelson/Tasman branch has also surveyed shorebird species in the Top of South Island during the summer period. In addition to Farewell Spit, Golden Bay also supports large populations of migratory shorebirds. The shorebird surveys have identified a number of sites in Golden Bay that are of International Importance (supporting regularly at least 1% of the total population) to Bar-tailed Godwit, South Island Pied Oystercatcher, Variable Oystercatcher and Banded Dotterel. I also draw your attention to the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement, Policy 11 which states: 'To protect indigenous biological diversity in the coastal environment: a) Avoid adverse effects of activities on indigenous taxa that are listed as threatened or at risk in the New Zealand Threat Classification System lists. Golden Bay coastal areas support 6 'threatened' and 9 'at risk' species. The Society fully supports environmental wellbeing and Te Oranga o Te Taiao, believing that human wellbeing is intimately linked to the environment, of which New Zealand's avifauna is a conspicuous and important component. Restricting access to motor vehicles on Golden Bay Beaches at specific times would positively benefit large populations of shorebirds and 'threatened' and 'at risk' coastal birds using these sites for breeding and roosting purposes. OSNZ Nelson fully support Cynthia McConville's proposals to reduce access to motorised vehicles on these sites.

Yours faithfully Paul D. Griffiths (B.A. Hons, M.Ed) Nelson Regional Representative the Ornithological Society of New Zealand'

Editor deserts post and swans off to NT during Nelson floods!

Yep, I left on Aug. 15 and returned on Aug 24 leaving wife, whanau and everyone else in the region to soak saturate and flood. It was 33 degrees and clear skies in the Northern Territory. After 2 years of rains when bird numbers have really built up, the current dry made for perfect birding. Even saw the critically endangered red goshawk and the elusive chestnut rail. Now I'm not going to rub it in and I really hope no one had any serious flood issues but I can't resist sharing a few pictures: Sorry!



Clockwise: Gouldians at waterhole, chestnut quilled rock dove, yellow tinted honeyeater, northern fantail, red collared lorikeet.

Projects: Wow- Its all happening!

There are currently a number of birdy projects and studies happening in the area led by branch members. These present some great opportunities for you to get involved, meet other members and get out in the field. I hope the list below includes everything!

- **Wader Census**

The next wader census will (provisionally) take place on 27-30 November - if you are interested in being part of this get in quick and contact Rob Schuckard. rschckrd@xtra.co.nz

- **Fernbird project**



Photographed by Paul G at Wakapuaka, this fernbird is carrying more bling than a Kardashian. All for the good purpose though of identifying and monitoring individual birds.



The work is ongoing on this project and involves amongst other things mist netting, banding, resighting and reporting marked birds. Contact Paul Fisher wildlands.nelson@gmail.com if you want involvement.

- **Spoonbill Project**



Royal Spoonbill. Photo Paul Griffiths.

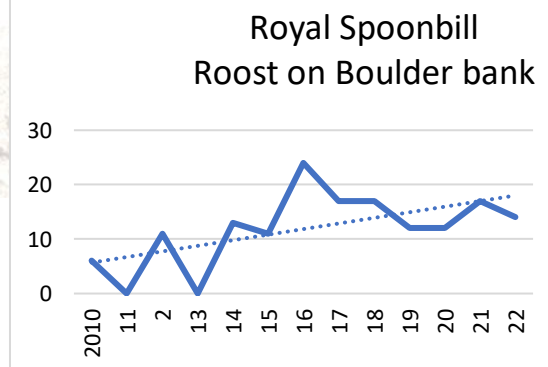
This regional project is now well underway with members planning to send in counts from their designated patch each month. We have about a dozen folk so far, from Puhanga in the west to the breeding grounds in the Wairau Lagoons. The plan is to count the number present at high tide, always counting at the same spot each month. If you count more than once, just send in the highest count. This little project may provide information that describes their movements east and west across the region and may help solve some mysteries around where our local population are breeding. Peter Field has been counting spoonbills at the Boulder Bank roost for some years now and his data (below) gives an indication of what we can expect regionally. If you wish to be involved, please contact Peter Gaze peterdgaze@gmail.com

Royal Spoonbill Boulder Bank roost numbers by month /year. Peter Field

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
2010						6						
2011					n/c			n/c				n/c
2012			n/c	n/c	n/c	n/c		11		n/c		
2013	n/c			n/c				n/c				
2014			4			12	13		n/c			
2015		n/c		9			11			n/c	2	
2016		0	6	24	13	16	13	11	14		n/c	
2017			17	n/c	n/c	14			n/c			n/c
2018	n/c		n/c	n/c	17		n/c	15	n/c			n/c
2019	n/c		n/c	n/c	n/c	n/c	12		n/c	n/c		
2020	0	0	n/c	n/c	n/c	8	0	n/c	12	n/c	0	n/c
2021	n/c	0	n/c	0	0	n/c	12	n/c	17	n/c	0	n/c
2022	0	n/c	11	9	n/c	0	0	14				

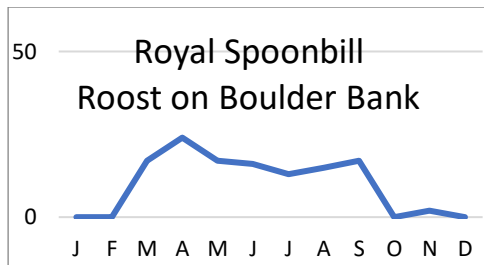
Highest count per year:

year	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
No. of birds	6	0	11	0	13	11	24	17	17	12	12	17	14



Highest count per month:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
0	0	17	24	17	16	13	15	17	0	2	0



- **Crested Grebe at Lake Matiri**

We are planning a day trip to see what may be the only crested grebe in our region – and the first presence for many decades. The trip will involve an hours walk each way. . At the moment the thought is that this trip might be either 19 or 20 November. Please let Peter know if you are interested. peterdgaze@gmail.com

If the sight of these birds tickles our fancy, we may then organise something similar to see them on a range of sites in Marlborough!

- **Morepork in Nelson**

It was 10 years ago that this branch of Birds NZ organised a survey of morepork distribution in Nelson. This became a community project with lots of observers. Nelson City Council was involved in mapping the distribution. Perhaps its time to repeat this survey and maybe this time it could be advertised through the Nelson Leader or similar? If someone is interested in guiding this project please contact Paul Griffiths. pgmedia2@gmail.com

- **Birds NZ Nest Record Scheme**

Peter Gaze talked about this at the September meeting. Probably anyone who is so inclined can get involved and while reporting on eg. a blackbird nest doesn't sound like cutting edge science, the data obtained may be very informative. For example nesting data shows welcome swallows are, on average, nesting 3 weeks earlier than in the 1960's. Global warming? Its also a great wee project to involve kids and gandkids and maybe sow the seed that will grow a future ornithologist. Anyway to get full instructions, download a record card or record nest information, follow this link; <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/schemes/nest-record-scheme/> You may have to log on to Birds NZ if you haven't set your computer to remember your password.

- **Harrier banding**

Paul Fisher is leading this project in our area. The long term aim is to look at harrier movement and dispersal, and also to discover the numbers or harriers present at and predated the Wakapuaka site. Paul F reports "Whilst working from home this week I have managed to catch two more harriers and use the new colour bands. David ordered the bands from the UK, which have been kindly paid for by Nelson OSNZ The colour bands look very smart and have a good overlap - keep an eye out for blue 100 and 101. There are four banded harriers now that have been caught at Hira, all appear to be males. A short clip of the catch this morning - a net with remote trigger from my house. You may need to copy the URL into your web browser. <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/bzI-ZKdEu68> Also there's an email discussion now started between the top of the South Harrier banding groups about a potential weekend in Feb or Mar 2023 in Blenheim catching, banding and learning more about moult, hosted by Mike Bell."



Picture shows the new 'easy to read' leg bands being used on harriers. If you wish to have involvement in this project or report sightings of banded birds, please contact Paul Fisher wildlands.nelson@gmail.com

Do it like Dunnocks!

At a recent meeting David Melville reported that he was hearing a lot of dunnock song. Paul G then played us a sound recording. I made a comment that people should google the extremely imaginative sex life of this bird. So, if you want to know more about the sordid activities that dunnocks are indulging in, possibly right outside your window, try googling "the sex life of dunnocks" Most (if not all) members will wish to ensure that 'safe search' is well and truly on.

Alternately this link should give you the general gist. You will probably never again be able to look a dunnock in the eye without blushing!

<https://scienceisnteverything.wordpress.com/2012/12/18/the-sex-life-of-dunnocks/>



A male Dunnock inspects a female's reproductive tract to make sure other male's sperm are not present.
Credit; Arend Vermazeren

Paul G has been out with his camera again!



tauhou, tōrea pango
and yellowhammer. By
Paul G



Atlas Newsletter: Tasman/Nelson. Robin Toy

There is a lot of information to help you decide where to atlas on the eBird atlas website under 'About-supporting materials. For example, you can download topographic maps of every square, and kml files showing every location at which counts have been done in each season or overall. Kml files can be imported into Maps.Me, Google Earth or any other mapping programme. Below is an example of winter count locations around Motueka, 2019-2021 (all the black spots). Plots like this don't show the effort at each count station, so use this tool in conjunction with the Atlas Effort tool to focus your atlas in the squares with least effort.

landscape-scale network of 1348 double-set stoat traps (DOC150s) over 10,000ha, and aerial 1080 in beech mast years targeting rats.

Trapping aims to achieve very low stoat numbers. The benefits of reducing stoat numbers are likely to be most apparent for large bird species such as roroa (great-spotted kiwi), whio, kaka and kea, that are vulnerable to stoat rather rat predation. Targeted monitoring of roroa and whio has demonstrated increased numbers of these species and we'll cover this in future newsletters. The density of traps used for stoat control is too low to have a significant impact on rats. Rat control has been restricted to aerial 1080 following mast flowering of the beech trees. Such control also reduces possums to very low levels and kills stoats through secondary poisoning.

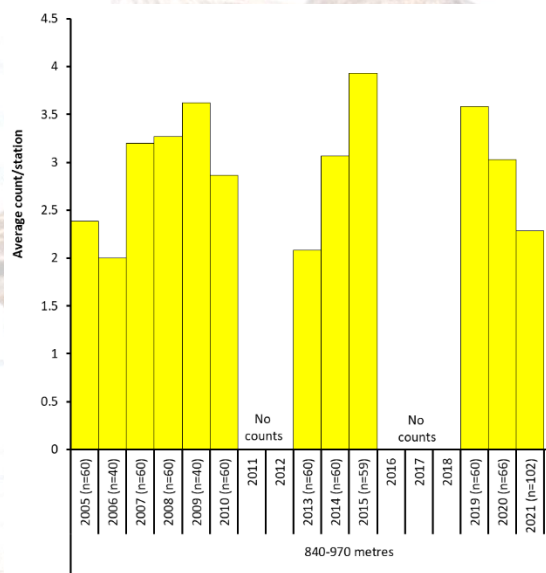
The effect of predator control on small forest birds has been monitored by five-minute bird counts (5MBC). Bird counts were initiated by Birds NZ along the Flora track in 2005 and were carried out annually until 2010. No counts were done in 2011 and 2012. In 2013, Friends of Flora took on the counts and did them in 2013-2015 and 2018-2021. There were 20 count stations, 100 m apart, each of which was visited twice on each of three days, a total of six counts/station. The count stations are between 840 and 970 m altitude.

Average counts are shown in the figures below. Note that the y-axis scale differs between species.

Most species have shown little change in counts as illustrated by bellbird.

Bellbird

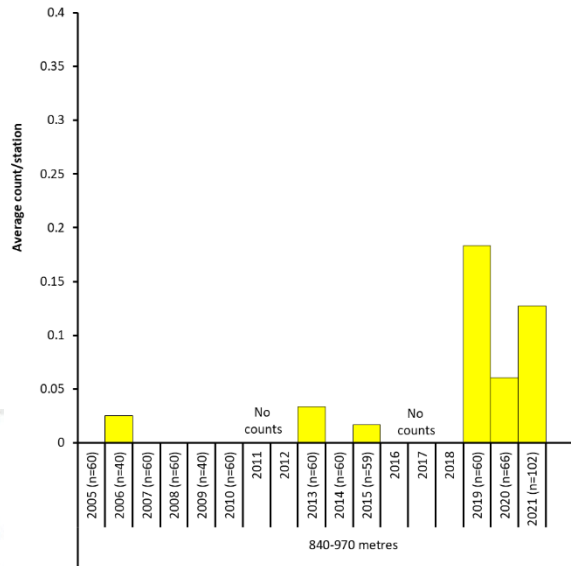
Average counts are the highest of any species and haven't varied much over time.



Many species are encountered too rarely to show trends. Weka were in this 'rarely-encountered' category, but appear to have left it, and are now relatively common.

Weka

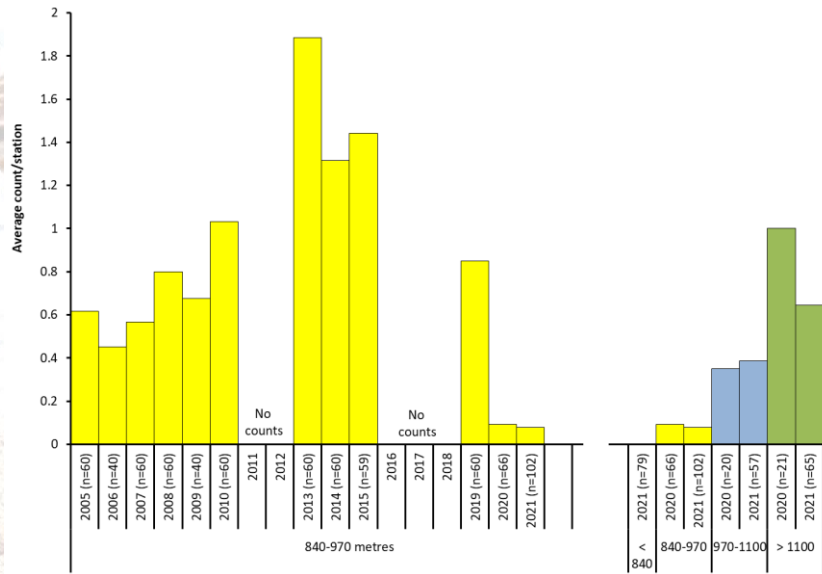
Appear to have become more common since 2015.



In 2020, a marked decline was noted in the number of rifleman. *Ad hoc* observations suggested rifleman were still being detected regularly at higher altitudes, so we did an additional single set of counts at 47 higher-altitude stations. Rifleman were detected at 20 of them. This illustrated that the counts since 2005 are not representative of the range of altitudes occurring in the Flora. So, in 2021, we expanded the number of count stations from 20 to 99, spread across altitudes from 736 to 1293 m.

Rifleman

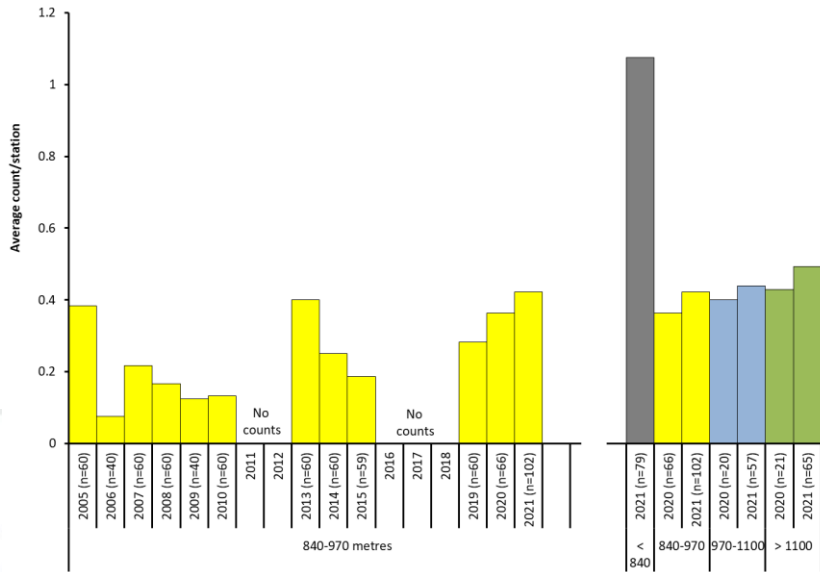
In 2020 a large decline in rifleman was observed along the Flora track (yellow bars on left of figure). The species is absent in the lowest altitude band, but becomes more common at higher altitudes (bars to right of figure). We suspect the decline was due to a period of high rat numbers.



Other species showing marked altitudinal variation, but little variation over time are robin, tomtit and brown creeper.

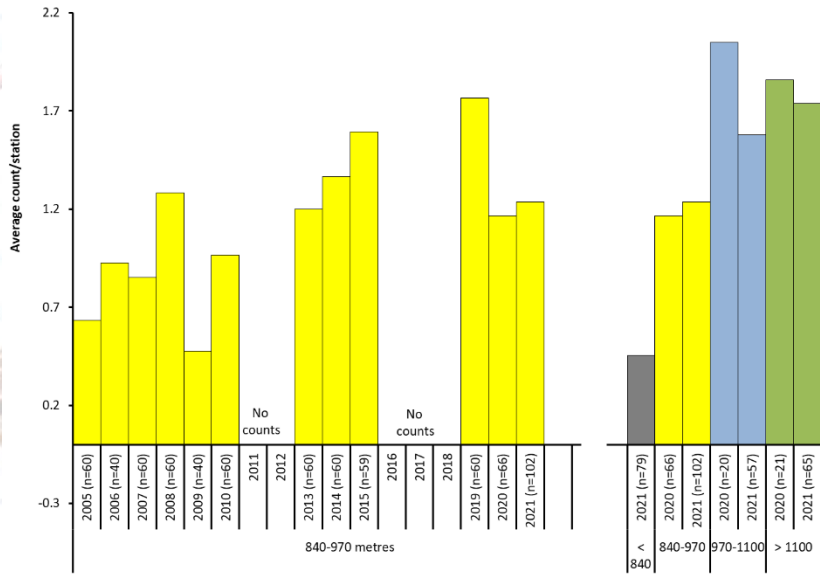
Robin

There has been little change in counts over time, but robin are much more abundant in the lowest altitude band.



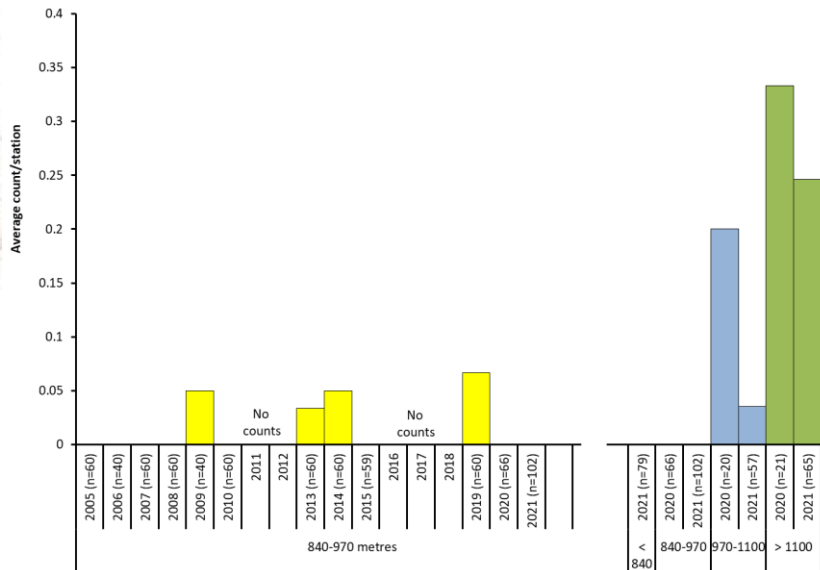
Tomtit

There has been little change in counts over time, but tomtit are more abundant at higher altitudes



Brown creeper

Have always been scarce in the Flora track counts, but counts are higher at higher altitudes.



A larger sample size would be required to show subtle changes in species abundance but the long-running Flora track 5mbcs showed the recent dramatic decline in rifleman. We will continue monitoring over the range of altitudes and will try to relate species abundance to rodent abundance.

Next Newsletter

The closing date for articles for the November newsletter is Nov 10th. All items, photos, reports, ideas, reviews, links, suggestions etc. are welcome. Please send to me Paul Bennett at; thebraveryofbeingoutofrange@gmail.com

