

THE ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND (Inc)

OSNZ — Birds New Zealand

birdsnz.org.nz and birdsnz.org.nz/society-publications/notornis/

March 2024



Greetings

At the last monthly meeting of Wellington Birds New Zealand (OSNZ) Johannes Fischer, our Regional Representative announced he was resigning from this position. Johannes is thanked for carrying out this role while at the same time fulfilling the demands of a challenging job. During his reign as RR he has organised an excellent range of speakers for our monthly meetings and shared his infectious enthusiasm for sea birds. Annemieke Hamilton who is a member of the DOC Banding Team has agreed to become the Wellington RR in the middle of the year. I am sure she will do an excellent job in this role and encourage members to offer her assistance in the running of our region.

Geoff de Lisle

Wellington Birds New Zealand Monthly Meetings

April Meeting

Our next meeting will be on Monday the 8th of April (the first is a holiday) during which **Jordana Whyte from the Dunedin Wildlife Hospital** will present a talk titled "**Hatching hope: caring for hoiho at Dunedin Wildlife Hospital**". *The team at the Dunedin Wildlife Hospital care for nearly all of the hoiho/yellow-eyed penguin chicks hatched on the mainland each breeding season. Their work has become a key intervention for this species and the many challenges it faces. As manager of the Wildlife Hospital Trust, Jordana will share more about their work with hoiho, including the massive undertaking that is caring for more than 150 chicks each November.*

As usual, this will be a hybrid meeting (and don't worry, I have renewed the Zoom link for the next two years so we won't have any issues arising like last month). Thus, you can join the meeting on **Monday 1st of April from 7.30 pm** in two ways:

1. In person at the Te Papa Collections Building, 169 Tory Street.
2. Online via the Zoom Meeting via the following link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82136365992?pwd=cxjFK6UbUgwca6UyRDJ6Sd8PADiFUy.1>

Recent Meetings

Feb 12th Members Night

Ian Armitage, gave a brief summary of the Birds New Zealand Pauatahanui Inlet surveys. The five series of surveys date back to 1982 and document some significant changes in bird life on the inlet. For example, there has been the appearance and a major increase in pied shags over this period while black shag numbers have declined. The last survey series has been notable for the presence for this first time of fernbird which were translocated from Rotokare to Pauatahanui in 2017.

Pauatahanui Survey – March 2024

The last of the monthly surveys of the 2022-24 Pauatahanui Inlet was conducted in March (pictured). Special thanks to all those who helped with the surveys over the last two years which included others not present in March. This was the 5th in the series of counts with the first carried out in 82/84. Most notably, Allan Munro has participated in all 5 series. A feature of the March survey was the presence of 2 scaup in the Pauatahanui stream. This is the first record of scaup in all 5 surveys.



Left to right. Allan Munro, Geoff de Lisle, Ian Armitage, Pam Watson, Nina Wortman, Dallas Bishop, Jan Keast, Raewyn Empson (photographer Gwyneth Armitage). Late Cashy Yates

Maria Rosa Dussler a post graduate student at **Victoria University** introduced her project “A comparative study of foraging behaviour of 3 Procellaria petrel species (Black petrel, Westland petrel and white-chinned petrel). Her study includes looking at the diving behaviour of these species in relation to bycatch susceptibility and the development of mitigation procedures.

Saul Ward & Alfie Benbow introduced the Young Birders New Zealand which is a group of 10-18 year-olds interested in birds who are affiliated to Birds New Zealand.

They have an active Facebook page and a very impressive newsletter. See below for the Young Birders weblinks, including their latest newsletter, February 2024.



<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/64cb42230649926ac30c287c/t/65e152b41ad34c2593856114/1709265620467/February+2024+Fledglings+Young+Birders.pdf>
<https://www.youngbirdersnz.com/>
<https://www.facebook.com/youngbirdersnz/>

Geoff de Lisle & Dallas Bishop summarised the histories of four recently-sighted, banded birds.
Fernbird, Mana Island. Colour banded bird translocated to Mana Island in April 2019 and re-sighted again on 25 December 2023. This is an elderly bird for a fernbird.

South Island pied oystercatcher – Orange 42 was banded as a juvenile on the Rangitata and fitted with a solar powered GPS unit. The bird was re-sighted in the Pauatahanui Inlet, and last seen on 4 February 2024 and has dropped its GPS unit.

Banded dotterel – Flagged with the unique identifier PHE on Eastbourne beach as a juvenile on 20 January 2021. Seen multiple times in the Pauatahanui Inlet during the non-breeding seasons. Last seen Ration Point, Pauatahanui, February 2024.

Little penguin - "Matiu" alias P52049. Banded as a chick on Matiu / Somes Island 20 November 2022 and recovered injured from a dog attack on a Kaikoura beach in 2023. Matiu lost an eye in the attack and has been "retired" to the Antarctic Centre in Christchurch.

Johannes Fischer, Wellington Big Day.

Johannes presented the results of his Big Day in the eBird Wellington Region (includes the Wairarapa) – the number of bird species seen in a 24 hour period. The Welli Big Day report was compiled using the Trip Report feature on eBird <https://ebird.org/newzealand/mytripreports#>



<https://ebird.org/tripreport/182544>

Species observed 91

Little spotted kiwi	2	Silver gull	204	New Zealand falcon	2
Greylag goose	1	Black-billed gull	50	New Zealand kaka	50
Canada goose	113	Southern black-backed gull	396	Red-crowned parakeet	2
Black swan	260	Caspian tern	17	Eastern rosella	3
Paradise shelduck	7	Common tern	1	Rifleman	5
Australasian shoveler	50	White-fronted tern	310	Tui	77
Grey duck	1	Little penguin	2	Bellbird	4
Mallard	129	Northern Royal Albatross	15	Grey warbler	5
Grey teal	43	White-capped Mollymawk	10	Whitehead	19
Brown teal	1	Northern giant petrel	2	Australian magpie	8
New Zealand scaup	28	Grey-faced petrel	2	NZ fantail	12
California quail	6	Flesh-footed Shearwater	8	North Island Saddleback	10
Ring-necked pheasant	3	Buller's shearwater	50	Stitchbird	2
New Zealand dabchick	6	Sooty shearwater	10	Tomtit	3
Rock pigeon	4	Hutton's shearwater	50	North Island robin	4
African collared dove	2	Fluttering shearwater	58	Skylark	36
Shining cuckoo	5	Australasian gannet	8	NZ fernbird	8
Eurasian coot	1	Little pied shag	51	Welcome swallow	70
South Island Takahe	1	Black shag	7	Silveryeye	28
Pukeko	34	Spotted shag	1	European starling	62
Spotless crane	2	Little black shag	22	Song thrush	20
Pied stilt	91	Pied shag	66	Eurasian blackbird	50
SIPO	3	Australasian bittern	2	Dunnock	2
Variable oystercatcher	42	Reef heron	1	House sparrow	98
Black-fronted dotterel	7	White-faced heron	8	Common chaffinch	15
Spur-winged plover	72	Eastern cattle egret	2	European greenfinch	22
Banded dotterel	13	Royal spoonbill	126	Lesser redpoll	2
NZ dotterel	4	Australasian harrier	10	European goldfinch	25
Bar-tailed godwit	3	Morepork	4	Yellowhammer	38
Arctic skua	8	Sacred kingfisher	8		
Pomarine skua	1				

March 4th, **Bird City. Status and Trends of the Wellington Region, Nikki McArthur.**

Five minute bird counts have been conducted for Wellington City and the Wellington Regional Council since 2011. They have been conducted at 100 locations round the city in parks and reserves with the major contributions from Nikki McArthur, Annette Harvey and Ian Flux. The bird life has been significantly influenced by the widespread predator control in the region and a major source of birds in Zealandia. Since 2011 the mean native bird counts have increased by 41%. Introduced birds have also increased but to a smaller degree. Nikki divided the birds into the four groups.

Survivor species – silvereyes, grey warblers, shining cuckoo, fantail, kingfisher and morepork. With the exception of fantail none have shown a significant change. Following 2011 there was a significant decline in fantail numbers followed later by a gradual recovery over the years. This change was most probably due to the big chill (August 2011).

Re-introduced species doing well – includes tui, kaka and kereru. These species have been recovering since the 1990s. Increases tui 85%, kereru 200% and kaka 260%.

Re-introduced species not doing well. Includes saddleback, hihi, robin and whitehead. These species were introduced into Zealandia but have not successfully occupied areas outside the fence.

Species - jury out. Include red-crowned parakeet, bellbird, falcon and morepork. The five minute bird counts for these species do not show significant trends as to whether or not they are permanently colonising beyond the Zealandia fence.

Zealandia Effect. The five minute counts do show a halo effect round the Zealandia fence with native birds suppressing introduced species. However, the predator control in Wellington City region is not sufficient to allow some bird species to successfully colonise beyond the fence. There is a growing body of evidence that cats remain a major predator of birds in the Wellington Region. Nikki stated that further improvements in the bird life in the city will not occur without effective steps to control cats.

State and trends in the diversity, abundance and distribution of birds in Wellington City. May 2023. Nikki McArthur, Ian Flux and Annette Harvey. <https://wellington.govt.nz/-/media/news-and-events/news-and-information/news/files/2023/wcc-bird-monitoring-report.pdf?la=en&hash=ED7DAC9861B5E884F2F0BAC1566142BB6A06BB94>

Who (or what) is killing all the robins?

[Allison Hess](https://thespinoff.co.nz/society/03-03-2024/who-or-what-is-killing-all-the-robins) Guest writer, 3rd March, 2024
<https://thespinoff.co.nz/society/03-03-2024/who-or-what-is-killing-all-the-robins>

This is a popular article on the survival of robins in the Waimapihi Reserve (formerly Polhill) which is next door to Zealandia. Dr Rachael Shaw from Te Herenga – Victoria University of Wellington, is investigating the unsettling pattern of disappearances of robins in the reserve with the help of students and volunteers Rachel Woolford, Annette Harvey and Melissa Boardman. The study dramatically shows that the predation of robins is so high that they cannot successfully colonise this reserve even though it is subject to predator control of rodents, mustelids and rodents. Trail camera evidence and post mortem findings demonstrate predation by cats.



The role of cats of predators of native birds needs be more widely publicised. Small but major steps have recently been made by Hutt City in regards to cat control with compulsory micro-chipping and de-sexing. The change in Hutt City has been as a result of the ongoing publicity of domestic cats preying banded dotterel nests on the Eastbourne beach. For control to be most effective bylaws should include the requirement that cats are kept indoors at night.

March 4th, **Dominic Ward** gave a presentation on the **Young Birders Camp at Makarora**. Dominic gave a brief summary of the activities of the Youth Camp which included five minute bird counts, mist netting and banding, general birding (43 species) as well as non-birding activities on fauna and flora (70 species of lepidoptera). This year the camp was held in conjunction with the Aspiring Biodiversity Trust

https://www.facebook.com/p/Aspiring-Biodiversity-Trust-100076666753549/?paipv=0&eav=AfaBmFYF878vucatPA2Fp-96ceyFT2H1MLdUROHt7wypC10ByQY62efWyNWg35DWddk&_rdr



[The Capital Kiwi Project](#)

19th February, 2024, Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/capitalkiwi/>

Introducing 'Ash' — the latest addition to the Capital Kiwi team.

Last week Ash (the brown vizsla-x on the right) and See (the black vizsla-x) travelled to Thames to be assessed as conservation dogs. Both dogs – accompanied by their handlers Pete and Christine – successfully achieved certification as part of DOC's Conservation Dog Programme.



This represents a changing of the guard for CK's dog squad. For Ash this means she's got her 'learner's license' as a kiwi dog. With some restrictions she can now start tracking and finding kiwi.

For See this means that after a decade of traveling the country tracking kiwi, she will now begin her transition into her retirement job (detecting kororā / little blue penguins 🐧 for mitigation work). Ash will be helping with the monitoring of Wellington's current kiwi population, and she'll be traveling north shortly to help find kiwi that will be translocated to Pōneke in coming months.

Rigorously trained and working closely with their handlers, around 120 conservation dogs play key roles across the country: detecting introduced pests and locating taonga. For more on the programme see:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/conservation-dog-programme>



Bird Snippets

Common Tern, Waikanae Sandspit

Michael Szabo » Thu Jan 04, 2024

Johannes Fisher and Igor Debski saw a Common Tern at Waikanae Sandspit with the White-fronted Tern flock there on 18th December:

<https://ebird.org/atlasnz/checklist/S15N6kzQ2E5ol BirdingNZ.net>

Wellington City biodiversity

Colin Miskelly » Thu Jan 11, 2024

I heard then saw two whiteheads in Spicer Forest (south of Porirua) on 10 January. They were together near the stile between pasture and forest as you descend from Colonial Knob on Te Araroa Trail.

These are the first whiteheads that I have seen in the forests that flank Colonial Knob since 2004, soon after the species was introduced to Zealandia (2001 & 2002). A few whitehead persisted and bred here between 2004 and 2010 before the population petered out. One of the birds was colour-banded, indicating that some or all had come from Zealandia 18 km away (but longer via forested patches).

I see that Nikki McArthur recorded a whitehead near my recent sighting in January 2021 (eBird). Given their absence in the town-belt forests between Otari and Tawa, I suspect that these birds have managed to cross the motorway corridor from the healthy population in the Horokiwi pine forest, which reaches down to the Takapu Valley floor only 4 km from where I saw the two birds. BirdingNZ.net

Common tern at Waikanae

Alan Tennyson » Sun Jan 14, 2024

Another common tern at the Waikanae River Mouth today. BirdingNZ.net.

Michael Szabo » Mon Jan 15, 2024

Nice find. I was there the day before with Oskar Ehrhardt but we didn't see one with the larger

flock. As per our eBird checklist, we counted 780 adult White-fronted Terns with at least 170 chicks and juveniles:

<https://ebird.org/atlasnz/checklist/S158749996>

Unfortunately, while we were there a kite surfer came right up onto the beach near the tern flock at the end of the sandspit and their kite zoomed right over, causing the entire flock to take off and all the chicks and juveniles to 'stampede' as a large group. He could see what he was doing to them but made no attempt to retreat or pull back the kite. Oskar filmed the incident with his phone so once I get the footage from him I'll try to make a more accurate count of the adults and chicks/juveniles. BirdingNZ.net

Common tern at Waikanae

sav » Tue Feb 27, 2024

I think that there are at least 2 different Common Terns involved here. The bird that AT saw yesterday was present again this morning - the darkened breast was obvious, along with a completely different shape/structure to the many WF terns present.

I saw no hint of red in the bill though, and I had long and close views.

BTW Common Tern is way more "common" in NZ than people think. Its just a slightly tricky id problem, and more people with better knowledge, with better cameras, are just finding more of them. BirdingNZ.net

Australasian Grebe – Pharazyn Reserve

Reported by many in eBird since the 10th of February.

11 Black-fronted Terns, Plimmerton

Michael Szabo » Wed Feb 21, 2024

Saw eleven Black-fronted Terns with 150 White-fronted Terns at Plimmerton fire station rocks at 1pm today (photos below).

Oskar Ehrhardt also reports seeing over 2000

WFTs at sea from Pukerua Bay later this afternoon so it's probably worth checking there and Plimmerton for roosting birds.

His mother also saw a large number of terns in Wellington harbour while driving north along the motorway from Thorndon. BirdingNZ.net

Wellington City biodiversity

Michael Szabo » Sat Mar 09, 2024

1 Black-fronted Tern seen this afternoon with c100 White-fronted Terns roosting on rocks in Island Bay and c300 White-fronted Terns roosting on rocks at Te Raekaihau Pt (but I was

too far away to see if there were any BFTs among them). BirdingNZ.net

Common tern at Waikanae

Alan Tennyson » Mon Mar 18, 2024 10:40 pm
A common tern was at Waikanae on Saturday (16 Mar). Its bill looked completely black. BirdingNZ.net

Hugh Robertson 21st March, Hugh reports an Eastern Common Tern at Waikanae sandspit on Thursday with the White-fronted Tern flock.

<https://ebird.org/atlasnz/checklist/S16565152>
[3](#)

Brown booby - Wellington



On the 19 March, Cook Strait Charters skipper Jonathan Delich reported that a brown booby (pictured) landed on his boat south of Mana Island.

He says it stayed on the boat for a couple of hours and then when they got back to Seaview marina in Lower Hutt it hopped onto the wharf for a bit and then took off, flying back out to sea.

Jonathan Delich/Cook Strait Charters has been the host for many seabird pelagic trips to the Cook Strait which have been enjoyed by Wellington Birds New Zealand members.

"Brown boobies have a wide distribution over tropical seas of the Indian, Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, plus the Caribbean Sea. The closest breeding sites to New Zealand are islands and cays of the Australian Great Barrier Reef". NZBirdsOnline. While most of the records of brown boobies in New Zealand are from the Hauraki Gulf and Northland there have been at least two records from the Wellington Region. In April 2017 a brown booby was sighted off Kapiti Island and in April 1975 a bird was seen in Wellington Harbour (Gaze 1975). Gaze, PD (1975) Brown booby in Wellington Harbour. Notornis 22:253-256.

Waikanae Estuary Scientific Reserve

Once again there has been inappropriate behaviour on the Waikanae Estuary Scientific Reserve which included the presence of dogs and vehicles on the sandspit. There is signage at the base of the sandspit (pictured) clearly stating Foot Access Only and dogs and vehicles are prohibited. In January the presence of vehicles on the estuary was reported in the national media.

DOC urges reporting of drivers at protected Waikanae estuary

8:08 pm on 10 January 2024

<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/506428/doc-urges-reporting-of-drivers-at-protected-waikanae-estuary>



RNZ reported “at least two cars have been reported to Department of Conservation and police within a week”.

Vehicles are banned at the Reserve under the Kapiti Coast District Council beach bylaw. <https://www.kapiticoast.govt.nz/council/forms-documents/bylaws/#Beach>

Vehicles are not permitted on most beaches in Kāpiti. Two-wheeled and off-road motorbikes are not permitted on any beach, foreshore or dune areas

Sightings of cars at the Waikanae estuary should be reported to 0800 DOC HOT and reports could result in a warning or a fine for the driver.

The Waikanae Estuary Care group have been active in promoting appropriate behaviour on the estuary and the reporting of illegal activities. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/estuarycare/>



Te Papa Blogs

Colin Miskelly and his brother Gordon have just completed the Te Araroa trail. The blog for the final leg of the trail is listed below. The 18 other blogs from the trail can be found on the Te Papa website, <https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/> Colin will be giving a talk on his Te Araroa walk later this year at the Birds New Zealand conference/annual general meeting in Nelson.

Birds of Te Araroa 19 – Te Anau Highway to Bluff

By: [Colin Miskelly](#), 15 Mar 2024

https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2024/03/15/birds-of-te-araroa-19-te-anau-highway-to-bluff/?mc_cid=81a93977c7&mc_eid=df137d7969

Between November 2023 and March 2024, Natural History curator Colin Miskelly walked the length of Aotearoa New Zealand on Te Araroa Trail – counting every bird seen or heard along the way. In this twentieth blog in the series, Colin describes birds encountered while walking the final section, through the Takitimu, Woodlaw, and Longwood Ranges to Colac Bay, then east along the coast to Invercargill, and south to the trail end at Stirling Point, Bluff.

New Zealand Bird Atlas

The Wellington Region*

The Birds New Zealand eBird Atlas scheme finishes on May 31st 2024. This will mark the

end of 5 years of collecting checklists. Wellington members are urged to continue to submit checklists for the Atlas until midnight on the 31st of May.

Total squares	105
Total Checklists	55727

Average checklists / square	
Species observed	160
Atlasers	502

Totals 17th March, 2024

*Includes the Wairarapa and Wellington regions.

For news on the New Zealand Atlas project visit their Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/NZBirdAtlas/>

The best way to find gaps that need your attention remains the Atlas Effort Map!

<https://ebird.org/atlasnz/effortmap>

Pukerua Bay Sea Watch Site

Sat 3 Feb 2024 9:03 AM

[Johannes Fischer](#)

Stationary

- Observers: 2, Duration: 1 hr, 53 min

<https://ebird.org//checklist/atlasnz/S160447353>

Observations

1. **Rock Pigeon (Feral Pigeon)** 2
2. **Arctic Skua** 8 Hunting prions quite successfully
3. Arctic/Pomarine Skua 1
4. **Silver Gull (Red-billed)** 10
5. **Southern Black Backed Gull (dominicanus)** 50
6. **White-fronted Tern** 30
7. **White-capped Mollymawk (steadi)** 5
8. **Northern Giant Petrel** 10
9. **Grey-faced Petrel** 5
10. **Juan Fernandez Petrel*** 1

About 800 m out. Seen very well, large Pterodroma Petrel, with grey upperparts with the classic dark M and no white nape, gleaming white under parts and no black markings on the underwing, bar a small dark comma. Awesome!! First flew S and came back and passed by N 15-20 min later.

11. **Fairy Prion** 50
Very close in. Likely new fledglings from the sounds. Skua fodder...
12. **White-chinned Petrel** 1
13. **Flesh-footed Shearwater** 1
14. **Hutton's Shearwater** 2000
Constant stream going south
15. **Fluttering Shearwater** 1000
16. **Australasian Gannet** 5
17. **Pied Shag Number observed** 3

*Rare and Vagrant. The Juan Fernandez petrel is on the list of Reportable rare/unusual birds in New Zealand and this sighting has been reported to the Committee.

Note: Cape Palliser is another sea watch site in the Wellington / Wairarapa region where a good range of pelagic sea birds can be seen in certain weather conditions

<https://ebird.org/atlasnz/checklist/S129556707> Including a note on weather conditions in eBird checklists provides valuable information.

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