



# THE WRYBILL

Canterbury Regional Newsletter

## AUGUST 2024

### Field Trips:

August 17 - Beach patrol at Kaitorete Spit from Birdlings Flat to the sand mining carpark (about 7km). If you would like to take part please contact Anita Spencer [birds.canterbury@birdsanz.org.nz](mailto:birds.canterbury@birdsanz.org.nz)

September 14, October 19, November 16 - Members are encouraged to participate in 'The Great Matuku Muster'. They are encouraging everybody to record bitterns to give us a better estimate of their population. If you would like to take part please register directly with them. [lovebittern.com](http://lovebittern.com)

October 12 - Global Big Day. It would be great to have some Canterbury teams or individuals entering in this event. [ebird.org/news/october-big-day-12-oct-2024](http://ebird.org/news/october-big-day-12-oct-2024)

Saturday November 9th. Another beach patrol at Kaitorete Spit, from Birdlings Flat to the sand mining carpark (about 7km). If you would like to take part please contact Anita Spencer [birds.canterbury@birdsanz.org.nz](mailto:birds.canterbury@birdsanz.org.nz)

(Contact Anita if you would like to host a future trip).

### Indoor Meetings:

Evening Meetings will take place at 7:30 pm on the last Monday of the month at Mahaanui Area DOC Office, 31 Nga Mahi Road, off Blenheim Road, Sockburn. Plenty of parking available,

August 26 - Peter Reese is talking about his banding projects, particularly harriers and some of the surprising results.

September 30 - Richard Jones, Birding in Australia's Northern Territory

November 4 (Please note the changed date due to labour weekend) - Sara Kross from the University of Canterbury is talking about 'Farm friends and farm foes: Understanding the net effects of birds for agriculture and how to create more bird-friendly farms.

December 2 - Members meeting and Christmas party. Please bring along any photos, videos, bird related bits and pieces to share with the group. Bring a plate for the party. Please note this is also a change of date from the last Monday of November since I'll be away for the last two weeks.

If you are willing or know someone who would be willing to present at a meeting please let Anita know at [birds.canterbury@birdsanz.org.nz](mailto:birds.canterbury@birdsanz.org.nz)



House Sparrow - Christchurch Botanic Gardens - Samuel Amaris

## RR's Report

Despite the depths of winter we've had a good turnout for meetings which I am sure our speakers appreciated. Our speaker on the 24 June was Frances Schmechel from Environment Canterbury.. Frances described the projects that ECAN has funded and the progress that is being made. It made me feel more optimistic for the future of our braided river birds as the strategic thinking behind the work was explained, and the coordination that is happening with other agencies.

On July 29th Bruce Postill gave a fascinating presentation on his visits to North Korea to survey the area for shorebirds as part of a NZ initiative. Bruce explained the history of the work, and the international diplomacy and negotiation that was required to allow the NZ team to visit. The enormous flocks of waders that they encountered were phenomenal, and there were several questions about how on earth you count birds on that scale to any accuracy. Afterwards I sent out a link to the TV Sunday documentary that filmed one of these visits, which built on Bruce's talk, with wonderful footage of the birds swiftly walking toward the birders as the tide rushes in over the mudflats.

Our winter wader count this year was combined with the national spoonbill census. After a postponement I was surprised, and relieved, at the strong turnout from members with over 25 people joining the count. Heather Rogers described watching a boat come up the Little/Ararira River flushing first a Kōtuku/White heron and then a Bittern/Matuku hūrepo. My section with Josh Overend wasn't quite so eventful with the high lake levels making crossing some of the drains quite challenging. Despite scanning desperately for either bittern or marsh crake we saw neither, but did enjoy mixed flocks of hundreds of greenfinches, redpolls, yellowhammers and goldfinches flying in the grasslands in front of us.

Other highlights from the day was an unbanded kakī at Muriwai/Coopers Lagoon spotted by William Harland and his family, and an Australian tern at the mouth of the Selwyn River by Warwick Allen, Megan Farley and Corey. The Jarvis Road section of Greenpark Sands provided overwintering red-necked stints seen by Kenny Rose, Brian Darlow, and Kieran Rowe. Spoonbills numbers across Canterbury were low. We had Birds NZ members spread across all the key sites for the census but the majority of returns were for nil birds. A total of 48 birds were recorded, a sharp contrast to summer numbers when we counted 1011 in February. I presume most of our birds have migrated north and I look forward to finding out the national count numbers when they are collated. This coming summer we will be doing a spoonbill nest survey so keep an eye out for messages about it, and spoonbill nesting behaviour as the time comes closer.

Phil Crutchley is keen to run more regular bird banding sessions for interested members, with the aim to increase people's bird banding skills beyond Level 1, and so members can contribute to future translocation projects. We ran a session behind the Styx Living Laboratory Trust field base, with Phil, Peter Reese and Della Bennet teaching 5 members how to extract birds from nets and band them. We caught 32 birds of 5 species over the 3 hours. I know there were several other members that wanted to take part so I hope we will do this again before the end of the year.

We have several other exciting projects in the planning which I hope to share with you when they are confirmed.

Happy birding  
Anita Spencer

## News Bulletin

### Wellington Newsletter

The latest edition of the Birds New Zealand Wellington region newsletter is now online <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/n-2406.pdf>

### Code of Conduct for Bird Photography

Birds New Zealand has issued a new Code of Conduct for the Photography of Birds.

Download:

[birdsanz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Code-of-Conduct-for-Photography-of-Birds-Guidelines.pdf](https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Code-of-Conduct-for-Photography-of-Birds-Guidelines.pdf)

# Rambles with Bev Alexander

Rambles are “unofficial” birding field trips hosted by Bev Alexander. All are welcome to participate and most rambles are at accessible locations.

## Upcoming Rambles:

August 21 - Birding at the Lincoln Wetlands. Meeting in the car park at 9:30 am.

September TBC - Contact Bev for more information.

Please let Bev know if you plan to come on any of these rambles.

Email: [birdiebev@xtra.co.nz](mailto:birdiebev@xtra.co.nz) Phone: 027 3184 713

## Ramble Review:

Our July Ramble was to Pegasus when 3 hardy birders enjoyed a walk around the wetlands & then visited the lake. There was a cool wind but thankfully the rain stayed away. We divided the walk into 4 parts:

(1) Walk / ramble around the south end and then up the east side to Tiritiri Moana Drive, we had a total of 20 species observed. Because of the growth of the raupo it was difficult to see some of the water. One thing we noted was the lack of passerines we saw on the track.

(2) After crossing the drive we walked round the north side in the hope of seeing the visiting Northern Shoveler. After being tricked by some Australasian Shovelers, we saw a very white object which looked like a piece of polystyrene but as we got closer we saw it was a sleeping Northern Shoveler. For 1 member this was her first sighting of this species. 10 new species were added to our list of the day.

(3) Our return ramble was back along the track down the west side of the wetlands.

Where we added another 4 species to our count. Something of interest was seeing a

Black Shag carrying nesting material to a large pine tree. Looks like spring is on its way.

(4) The last visit was to Lake Pegasus where we saw 2 Crested Grebe & added Red-billed Gull to give us 36 species total for the trip.

Overall it was a very enjoyable and exciting day of birding.

## *Bev Alexander*

*“Each time she goes out birding Bev does her best to pick up discarded paper, tins, bottles & other rubbish carelessly thrown down by the educated public!*

*Here she is careful not to sink in, retrieving golf balls which had ended up in the ponds by Ravenswood. Obviously, people go to practise their skills on the open ground though if a golf ball ends up hitting a small Black-fronted Dotterel it would surely kill it.” - Janet Burton*



Northern Shoveler - Samuel Amaris



Bev the Retriever - Janet Burton

# SO MANY WAYS TO HELP OUR BIRDS



Image by Stefan Marks.

Birds New Zealand's Bird Atlas Project is recording bird populations and distribution around the country to inform evidence-based conservation and management.

[www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/join-now/](http://www.birdsnz.org.nz/membership/join-now/)

**JOIN US NOW**



## Nelson/Tasman Bird Camp 28<sup>th</sup> September – 4<sup>th</sup> October 2024



A “Booming” Programme awaits all Young Birders! Save your place! Includes accommodation, food and transfers  
Fee: \$790

| Date  | Activity  |
|---|---|
| <b>28 Sept (Sat)</b><br>12:30 pm                                      | Attendees collected from Nelson Airport (provide own lunch). Birding on the way to Farewell Spit! Tasman  |
| <b>28 Sept (Sat)</b><br>Before 4pm                                    | Arrive Health Post Lodge Te Whare Whakatā, Farewell Spit. Welcome, programme introduction/H & S/Welfare talk. Room allocations/etc. Site Tour Welcome dinner Talk Ebird and kit                                       |
| <b>29 Sept (Sun)</b><br>8:30 am meet on site<br>Afternoon session tbc | Health Post/Talk/Tour at Cape Farewell seabird enclosure/PF Fence<br>Farewell Spit birding/wader counts<br>Talk tbc – dead bird survey technique?   |
| <b>30 Sept (Mon)</b><br>All day field trip<br>Evening                 | Pakawau/Collingwood bird watching and band resighting<br>Whio?<br>Pack up ready for Mangarākau Lodge morning departure  |
| <b>1 Oct (Tues)</b><br>8am  | Head to Mangarākau Swamp birding on the way Lodge Intro/ Health and safety briefing on arrival set up for next few days followed by Site tour<br>Bird Call talk/ Dusk call experience - Half hour before/after sunset |
| <b>2 Oct (Wed)</b><br>6am<br>3:00pm                                   | Dawn bittern recording/5 min bird counts or Mist netting/bird banding demonstration.<br>Conservation practices  |
| <b>3 Oct (Thurs)</b><br>6am<br>3pm                                    | Dawn bittern recording/5 min bird counts or Mist netting/bird banding demonstration.<br>Rails<br>Leaving dinner and end of camp Quiz!   |
| <b>4 Oct (Fri)</b><br>8:15 am departure (latest)                      | Packed up ready to leave for Nelson Airport drop - 11:30am  |

Outline Itinerary

\*NB: Itinerary may be subject to change

# Ghosts of Species Past: The Demise of New Zealand's Moa

New Zealand was once home to giant flightless birds called moa. They had grown accustomed to life without predators. So the arrival of humans in the mid-13th century presented a massive – and ultimately insurmountable – challenge to their existence.

Moa were unable to cope with even low levels of hunting by people. All nine species of moa were driven to extinction soon after first contact with humans. These moa populations collapsed and disappeared so swiftly it seemed impossible to trace their declines, until now.

In our new research, we reconstructed patterns of population decline, range contraction and extinction for six moa species. We simulated interactions of moa with humans and their surroundings using hundreds of thousands of scenarios. Then we validated these simulations against information from fossils.

We found all six species collapsed and converged on the cold, isolated mountains of New Zealand's North and South Islands. These happen to be the same sites where the last of New Zealand's flightless birds can be found today. ...

While New Zealand's remaining flightless birds are no longer being hunted to extinction, threats to their survival still align with human activity.

Habitat loss and impacts of invasive species follows waves of European settlement across New Zealand, which gradually progressed from lowland sites to the less hospitable, cold and mountainous regions.

Efforts to conserve New Zealand's remaining flightless birds can heed lessons from the ghosts of species past. The sad demise of the moa highlights the immense importance of isolated areas. If we are to prevent future extinctions, we need to protect and preserve these remote, wild places.

*Damien Fordham - Associate Professor of Global Change Ecology, Adelaide University*

*Jamie Wood - Senior Lecturer, Ecology and Evolution, Adelaide University*

*Mark V. Lomolino - Professor emeritus, State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry*

*Sean Tomlinson - Research Associate, Ecology and Evolution, Adelaide University*

Link to article: <https://theconversation.com/ghosts-of-s...1721854044>

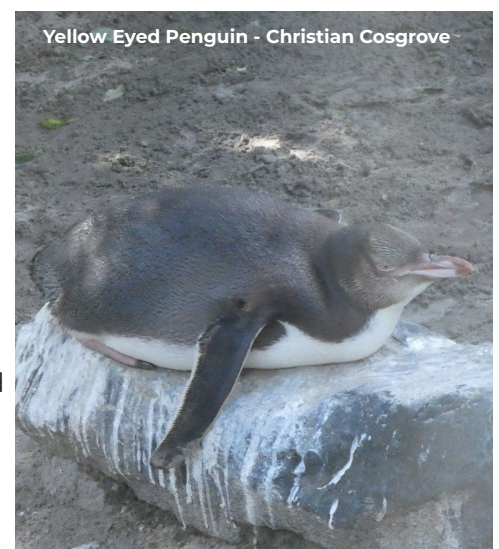
Link to paper: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41559-024-02449-x>

## Yellow-eyed Penguin/Hoiho early chick mortality post-mortems

Every year approximately a third of all hoiho that hatch on the mainland die in the first two weeks of life. Given the small and decreasing size of the mainland hoiho population, these early chick deaths have a significant negative impact on the conservation of this species. For the last three years, all early chick mortalities have received a full post-mortem examination. As a result, we now have a much better understanding of the causes of these early chick deaths, with some very successful management interventions implemented to reduce these deaths - however there is still much to learn.

Post-mortems allow gross pathological findings to be recorded (including photos), and samples to be collected for histology and molecular work. One of the aims of this work is to better understand the epidemiology of the yellow-eyed penguin virus, a novel virus described in 2022 (Wierenga et al, 2022). I am grateful to BoNZ for providing funding towards these post-mortems and sample collection via the Project Assistance Fund, allowing this important work to continue. This project is part of a wider PhD project investigating a causative link between the YEP-gyrovirus and Respiratory Distress Syndrome, currently the preeminent cause of early chick mortality and responsible for more than half of all early chick mortalities each season.

*Harry Taylor - 30 June 2024*



Yellow Eyed Penguin - Christian Cosgrove

# New Zealand Bird Banding Scheme

## BACKGROUND

Banding of birds dates back to 1899 when a Christian Mortensen produced numbered aluminium bands, and used them to band storks, teal, starlings and other birds in Denmark. Banding or ringing is now common in many countries in the world, with millions of birds being banded yearly. Banding of birds in New Zealand has been carried out since the late forties by the Wildlife Service of the Department of Internal Affairs (game birds and waterfowl) and since 1950 by the Ornithological Society of New Zealand in conjunction with the National Museum (all other birds). (New Zealand's National Museum is now known as the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa).

In 1967 the two schemes were merged into the New Zealand National Bird Banding Scheme (NZNBBS). From then on, all bird banding was controlled by the Wildlife Service, where all records were kept, until the Department of Conservation took over the guardianship of the scheme on 1st April 1987.

## PURPOSE

The aim is to obtain accurate information about movements and habits. Apart from its purely scientific value, such knowledge is essential for effective conservation of native species, for management of game birds, and for the control of those which are considered pests.

## RESULTS

When this page was first published, back in April of 2003, over 1,150,000 birds of 230 different species had been banded throughout the New Zealand Region with around 25,000 birds being banded each year.

According to DOC the NZNBBS has now issued more than 2 million unique numbered metal bands to banders, and of the 1.6 million banded birds, there have been over 300,000 resighting and recovery records.

Recoveries of banded birds are bringing to light much information about the migrations, habits, lengths of life and causes of death of wild and hand reared New Zealand birds.

The success of the banding scheme depends, to a large extent, on the reporting of bands by members of the public who find them. Every band recorded adds another item of information and may even mean an entirely new discovery.

## REPORT A SIGHTING

If you find a banded bird (alive or dead). Apart from ducks and other game birds, which are shot for sport, no bird seen wearing a band should be harmed, for it may be under observation by the bander. If any bird is caught alive and healthy, the number and address on its band should be carefully noted and the bird released again still wearing its band, as it may be recovered again. The number on the bird's band, the colour of the band, band found on the left or right leg, the date, place, and circumstances of recovery should be reported to the Banding Office as soon as possible.

Report the sighting at:

[birdbanding.doc.govt.nz/sightings](http://birdbanding.doc.govt.nz/sightings) on the FALCON website.

There are many other links to DOC, but the following provides a lot of useful, interesting and timely information about bird banding in New Zealand.

[doc.govt.nz/our-work/bird-banding/](http://doc.govt.nz/our-work/bird-banding/)





PMNT Team in Pyongyang April 2016 - Photo Credit: Pukororo Miranda Shorebird Center

## The Secret North Korea Stopover: *Following the world's migratory shorebirds*

**The world's migratory shore birds are getting unique support from a New Zealand group working in an unlikely place - North Korea.**

The secretive state is considered by many to be the world's most repressive regime due to its nuclear weapons programme, famines and human rights abuses under the cult-like leadership of the Kim family.

But for almost a decade the small group of New Zealanders has been quietly slipping in and out of the country, building ties that are the envy of diplomats.

Their work has gone largely unnoticed until now.

This year TVNZ's Sunday programme was granted extraordinary access to North Korea, to parts of the country no foreigner has ever been, and to witness an unlikely collaboration that could end up saving the world's migratory shore birds. Watch the full story on the article.

*\* Sunday travelled to North Korea with the assistance of the Asia NZ Foundation.*

May 28, 2018

Many members enjoyed Bruce Postill's talk at our meeting in July about his shorebird work in North Korea. Here is a link to the documentary that was filmed during one of his visits.

[1news.co.nz/2018/05/27/the-secret-north-korea-stopover-following-the-worlds-migratory-shorebirds/](https://1news.co.nz/2018/05/27/the-secret-north-korea-stopover-following-the-worlds-migratory-shorebirds/)

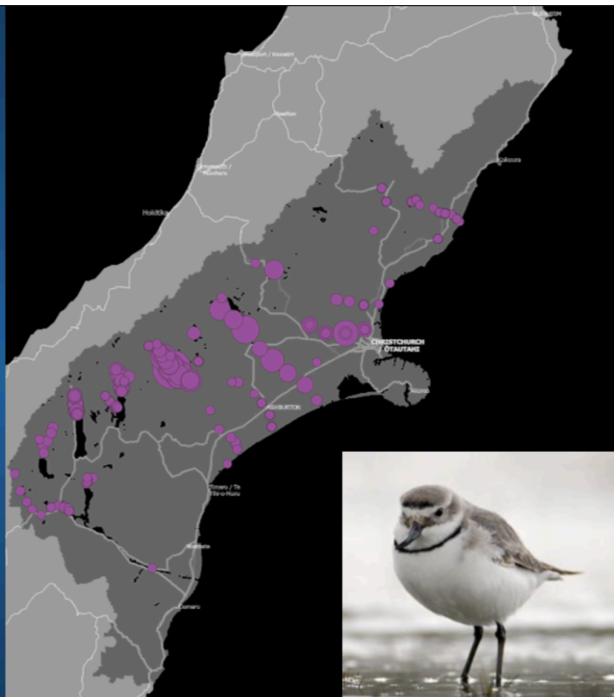
A team from the Pūkorokoro Miranda Naturalists' Trust have been travelling to China and North Korea for several years to survey the shorebirds in the Yellow Sea. In 2018 they were followed by Mark Crysell and a TVNZ crew who brought us a closer look at their efforts to survey the birds in an area that very few people have an opportunity to see.

# Frances Schmechel - Birds & Braids (Excerpt)

## Wrybill / Ngutu pare Endemic

Threatened – Nationally Increasing  
'Obligate' (dependent on Braided River habitat)

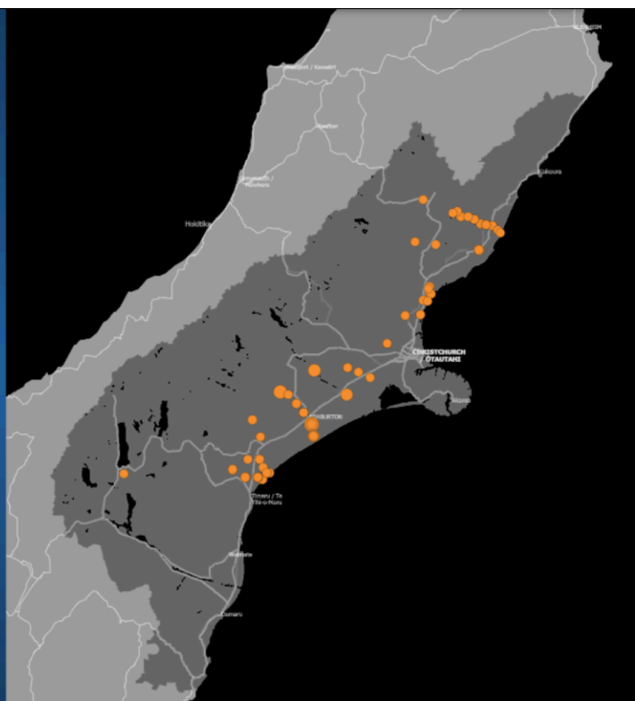
- 2000-present (all slides)
- Strongholds
  - Upper Rangitata
  - Rakaia (upper and mid)
  - Mackenzie basin
  - lower Waimakariri (?)
- Upper Waiau Uwha the northern limit
- Most in Canterbury but some breeding in Otago



## Black-fronted dotterel / Pohowera

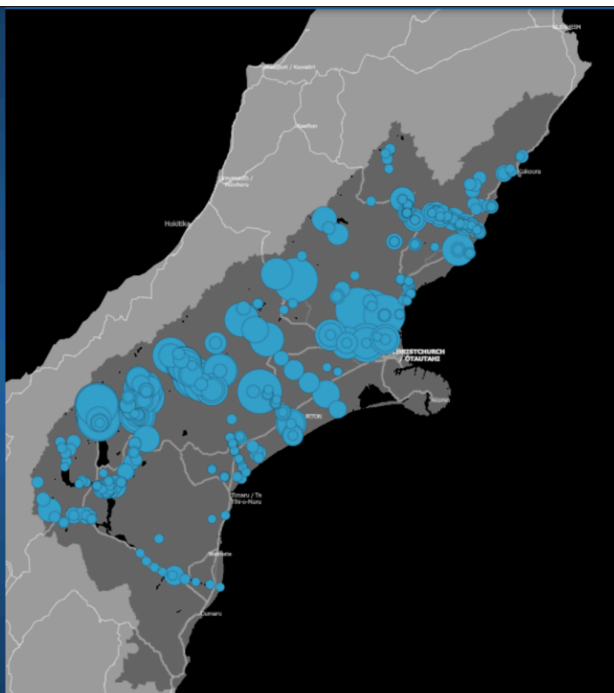
Native  
At Risk - Naturally Uncommon

- 2000-present
- Interesting to compare with earlier periods



## Banded dotterel / Pohowera

Endemic  
At Risk - Declining







great birds. Noteworthy observations of the day were: an Australian Tern spotted at the Lower Selwyn Huts, an unbanded Black Stilt at Muriwai/Coopers Lagoon, three overwintering Red-necked Stints at Jarvis Road and 18 Black-fronted Dotterel seen at Embankment Road. However Spoonbill numbers in the surveyed half of the lake were very low compared to the summer.

The Northern Shoveler remained at Pegasus Wetlands throughout the winter, staying for its longest period in recent years. Its whereabouts during the rest of the year continue to stay a mystery.

The pair of Little Egrets continue to reside at the Ashley/Rakahuri Estuary which was notably quiet this winter season, particularly due to the duck hunting and the migration of the Wrybill.

A singular White-winged Black Tern in winter plumage was briefly spotted at the Bromley Oxidation Ponds in late June. Additionally, three others were seen with Black-fronted terns in two paddocks near Ashburton in late-June.

The Common Myna pair that had been hanging around a roundabout in Christchurch's red zone were dealt with by Environment Canterbury. One individual was eliminated and the other has been scared away with reports including at the New Brighton Mall.

Winter beach patrols yielded a number of intriguing finds, including a dead beach-wrecked Fulmar and a live Mottled Petrel, which was subsequently taken into care.

Important sightings around Christchurch included a New Zealand Falcon near Styx Mill and Cirl Buntings at the Godley Head car park.

The Canterbury branch has hosted some particularly interesting talks recently. Especially Bruce Postill's talk on shorebirds in North Korea. We also had a variety of field trips with a banding workshop run by Phil Crutchley at Styx Mill Reserve, the Ashburton Lakes survey organized by Don Geddes, the Lake Ellesmere winter wader count and the Spoonbill survey. Additionally we also had some birding rambles run by Bev Alexander around Waimakariri and Christchurch. As we bid farewell to winter and begin to see the breeding plumages of spring, we eagerly anticipate the upcoming wader season.

## Health and Safety

For everyone to have an enjoyable time on field trips and other activities we need to make sure everyone stays safe. Here's how you can do your bit.

1. Wear clothing appropriate for the activity such as plenty of warm layers, hat and gloves in winter; a sunhat and sunglasses in summer. Bringing a raincoat is always a sensible option. Footwear needs to be suitable as well - think sturdy soles and good ankle support for many walks, especially on hills, something that can get wet and muddy especially at Lake Ellesmere in winter. Walking poles could be helpful to some on steep and/or uneven ground.
2. Be honest and open about your physical abilities. Not all trips will be suitable for everyone. If you have a pre-existing medical condition that could impact the trip (such as - but not limited to - asthma, allergy to bee stings, diabetes) please notify the trip leader of the condition, any problems that could arise and what the trip leader and others may be required to do to assist you. This information will be kept confidential unless a medical event requires it being shared. Make sure you bring whatever medications you may need.
3. Bring enough food and drink for the event plus a little extra in case the trip takes longer than planned. Fresh water is not always available and dehydration can be a concern in summer so bring your own drinking water.
4. Listen to the health and safety briefing given at the beginning of each trip, keep your eye out for any unexpected hazards and talk to the trip leader and others if you have any concerns along the way. Let the trip leader know of any accidents or near misses.
5. Stay with the group at all times unless you have the trip leader's okay.
6. The trip leader reserves the right to decline participation in any trip if they have concerns about anyone being unable to participate safely or not being suitably equipped.
7. Health and safety incidents or concerns must be reported to the trip leader/RR immediately.

## Scopes for Loan:

If you are in Canterbury and wish to borrow a scope contact Sandra (sandraw67@gmail.com). If you are on the West Coast and wish to borrow a scope, contact Liz Meek (ronmeek555@gmail.com).

## Submissions:

The editor invites members to submit articles and/or photos for the next issue of *The Wrybill*. Please email any contributions through to samuel.amaris.home@gmail.com. Many thanks to everybody who contributed to this edition of *The Wrybill*.



South Island Tomtit - Boyle River Camp - William Harland

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