

# KUAKA



## Welcome to the newsletter of the South Auckland Branch of Birds NZ

Te Kahui Matai Manu o Aotearoa

Issue 60 – AUGUST 2024

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A pair of well coloured up tuturiwhatu from up Awhitu way courtesy of Kate.

In addition to dotterels, our Awhitu correspondent came across a pangurunguru (southern giant petrel) and further down we explain the circumstances and outcome of this discovery.

Do take a look at the pukeko battle photos – quite an event.

**Our next meeting will be on Tuesday  
Sept 10 at 7.30pm**

If you would like to contribute to our newsletter – whether to supply a drawing or photo, detail of a sighting, or maybe an article or two – just drop an email to the editor.

We would love to hear from you.

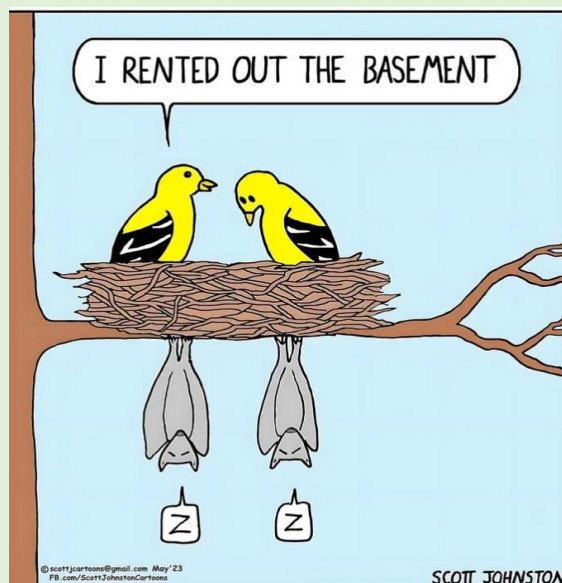
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## PROGRAMME FOR 2024

**Monthly Meetings:** held on the second Tuesday of each month, at the Papakura Croquet Club, 1 Chapel Street Papakura. Meetings start at 7:30. Visitors welcome. \$3.00 donation to cover costs please

<b>Sept 10</b>	Monthly meeting	John Sumich will talk about matuku and the upcoming Great Matuku Muster
<b>Oct 8</b>	Monthly meeting	Taneal Gulliver on bellbirds, dabchicks and mallee fowl
<b>Oct 19</b>	Great Matuku muster	check out <a href="http://www.lovebittern.com">www.lovebittern.com</a>
<b>Nov 3</b>	Wader & Spoonbill Census	Firth of Thames
<b>Nov 12</b>	Monthly Meeting	Kristal Cain will tell us about her studies on rifleman calls
<b>Nov 16</b>	Great Matuku muster	check out <a href="http://www.lovebittern.com">www.lovebittern.com</a>
<b>Nov 17</b>	Wader & Spoonbill Census	Manukau
<b>Dec</b>	TBA	End of year BBQ



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## SPEAKER FOR AUG 2024

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Dave Houston works for DOC and is a tuturuatu/shore plover wrangler for the Shore Plover Recovery Group.



With just 285 individuals (both wild and captive populations) the tuturuatu or shore plover, also known as tchuriwat by Moriori, is one of our most threatened endemic birds.

Shore plover once frequented the coastline of Aotearoa/New Zealand from rocky platforms to sandspits, river mouths to tidal estuaries. They are mentioned in the reports from Cooks second voyage. However, they were early casualties of Norway rats and cats, disappearing from the mainland by the 1870's with the only known population of around 120 individuals surviving on Hohoreoro/South East Island in the Chathams.

Clearly, a population of just 120 found on one island is very risky to the continued survival of a species. The goal of the Shore Plover Recovery Programme is to establish wild populations at five or more locations and an overall population of 250 or more mature individuals. In an attempt to achieve this, a breeding population of 11 pairs is maintained across three locations. The Isaac Conservation & Wildlife Conservation Trust in Canterbury, Cape Sanctuary in Hawkes Bay, and Pukaha National Wildlife Centre in the Wairarapa.

This population goal is challenging for several reasons. Predator-free islands with suitable habitat are not common. The preferred plover habitat features rock platforms for foraging for marine and terrestrial invertebrates and small fish. They need vegetation to nest under and for chicks to shelter under, and of course the island must be free of all predators – including kahu, harrier, and ruru.



Attempts have been made to settle shore plover on five new islands but only two have been successful; Mangere Is in the Chathams and Portland Is/Waikawa in Hawkes Bay. A third site – Motutapu – hangs by a thread.

A stoat incursion on Motutapu in 2021 resulted in the death of three individuals before the remainder were evacuated. Prior to this, attempts to establish a population of Waikawa in 2012 were hampered by rat incursions, resulting in loss of more than 80% of the birds. Fortunately, the population on Waikawa is now doing well, with 80 birds.

Avian predators, specifically ruru, are a problem on Motutapu and currently there are only seven shore plover on the island. Whilst pairs have successfully bred on the island the chicks are predated by ruru, pukeko, and magpies. The island will likely require captive-bred translocations of juveniles for at least the next five years.

There is a further issue with shore plover. They have a strong fidelity to where they have been reared and it is not unknown for them to return to their breeding facility (an 835km flight in one case!).

Meanwhile, rearing shore plover chicks in breeding facilities hasn't been smooth sailing. The chicks are very susceptible to avian poxvirus, spread by mosquitoes, mites or flies. Vaccine trials did not prove successful and it is likely that genetic inbreeding (all captive-bred individuals share one of four grandparents) is the problem. Genetic research shows that the wild population of the Chatham's are more distant relatives. As a result, eggs are transferred from the wild pairs to the captive-breeding programme to boost genetic diversity.

Overall, not one of the more positive presentations we have had. The good news is that the captive breeding facilities have been upgraded and chick survival has greatly improved with bringing in of wild bred eggs to tackle the in-breeding problem. Something to watch for the future. Good luck to Dave and the team.

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## SIGHTINGS

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- Kotuku have been reported from Wattle Downs, Pahurehure inlet, and near the airport. All the same individual or more than one individual?
- A kuruwhengi/shoveller count was undertaken at the Tuakau oxidation ponds with a total of 102 birds reported – 70% of these were male
- In addition to the shovellers, six weweia/dabchick and a number of kotuku ngutu papa/spoonbill were seen
- Large finch flocks are still being encountered around the rohe
- A female pohowera/banded dotterel from Kaikoura came up north for the winter and has now returned there, taking with her an Auckland region male
- Chaffinch and Dunnock singing has been reported from Bombay
- The sand spit on which pohowera/banded dotterel have nested in the past at Port Waikato, has been washed away (there is severe erosion going on at Sunset Beach and the river mouth)
- Two matuku moana/reef heron were photographed together at Orua Bay (Awhitu Pen)



A lonely white-winged black tern at Wattle Downs (Photo: Sue)  
The poor fellow is continually harassed by the gulls at the ponds.

In late July Kate rescued a distressed juvinelle great southern giant petrel/pangurumguru (*Macronectes giganteus*) from the beach at Orua Bay (Awhitu Pen). Kate took the manu to Bird Care in Green Bay who then transferrred the severely underweight and anaemic bird to the veterinary team at Auckland Zoo. As of August 9 the manu is gaining weight, can walk and has a pool to swim and exercise in. Fingers crossed it recovers fully and can be released back into the wild.



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## RR REPORT FOR AUGUST 2024

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After spending a lot of hours over the last five years travelling far and wide in our South Auckland region to do atlas checklists in under-surveyed squares, I am now spending more time looking out for birds in my local neighbourhood.

The Wattle Downs stormwater ponds are located not too far away from me, and have turned up a number of interesting sightings in the last month or so. Breeding seems to have started early – I saw a Mallard with 8 small ducklings on 16<sup>th</sup> July, but unfortunately the young have not been seen again.

A pair of Black Swan with five young cygnets were seen on 24<sup>th</sup> July, and all five are growing well. A swan's nest with five eggs was also found about the same time, but a dead adult has recently been found nearby.

Black-billed gulls are usually present here, and I have managed to read bands on some of them. Tony Habraken banded them all and provided the details

E-196723 was banded at Miranda in Dec 1997 (27 years ago) seen 11<sup>th</sup> Apr

E-104264 was banded at Clarks Bay in Jan 2001, seen 30<sup>th</sup> Jul

E-210429 was banded at Kidds in Jan 2020, seen 30<sup>th</sup> Jul

The highlight has been my first sighting of a white-winged black tern, in non-breeding plumage, first seen on 28<sup>th</sup> Jul and since then on 4<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Aug. It seems to like hanging out with flocks of gulls on the grass, although they do chase and generally harass it.

Up to 12 Spoonbill are often seen roosting or feeding in the nearby Tington Reserve pond around high tide, presumably coming from the Manukau Harbour.

Finally, thank you to the Tom and Hazel Harty and to the estate of Ted Kitching for the donation of books to our group. Many of the books have already made their way onto new book shelves!

**Happy birding**

**Sue Frostick**

### SO MANY WAYS TO HELP OUR BIRDS



The Birds New Zealand Research Fund is funding new research on our endemic wrens and tomtits to help inform evidence-based conservation management.

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

**JOIN US NOW**

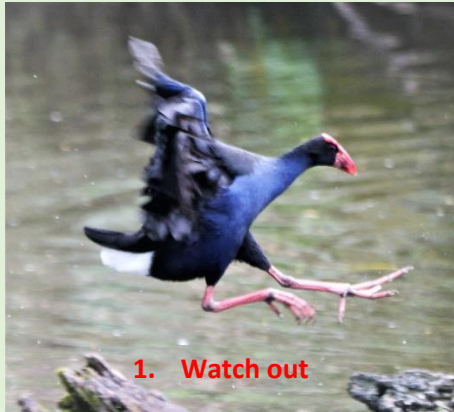


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## THE GREAT PUKEKO BATTLE

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Photo essay from Mike Clark





Whoops!

Photo from Kate

A close-up photograph of two fluffy, greyish-brown penguin chicks. One chick is in the foreground, looking towards the right. Another chick is behind it, also looking right. The background is a textured, brownish surface.

### Kororā Kōrero

with NZ Penguin Initiative (NZPI) & Co.



*Sharing Penguin Conservation with Conversation*

**1ST WEDNESDAY OF EVERY MONTH 12-1PM ONLINE**



**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
28 Sept (Sat) 12:30 pm	Attendees collected from Nelson Airport (provide own lunch). Birding on the way to Farewell Spit! Tasman
28 Sept (Sat) 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
29 Sept (Sun) 8:30 am meet on site Afternoon session tbc	Health Post/Talk/Tour at Cape Farewell seabird enclosure/PF Fence Farewell Spit birding/wader counts Talk tbc – dead bird survey technique?
30 Sept (Mon) All day field trip Evening	Pakawau/Collingwood bird watching and band resighting Who? Pack up ready for Mangarākau Lodge morning departure
1 Oct (Tues) 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 Bird Call talk/ Dusk call experience - Half hour before/after sunset
2 Oct (Wed) 6am 3:00pm	Dawn bittern recording/5 min bird counts or Mist netting/bird banding demonstration. Conservation practices
3 Oct (Thurs) 6am 3pm	Dawn bittern recording/5 min bird counts or Mist netting/bird banding demonstration. Raals Leaving dinner and end of camp Quiz!
4 Oct (Fri) 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

**NB: Birds South Auckland are planning a Young Birders programme for December. Watch this space for details.**

**Thanks for reading Kuaka issue # 60, August 2024**

If you would like to contribute to our newsletter - whether you just want to supply a drawing or photo, or maybe even an article or two – just drop an email to the editor.

**Hope you enjoyed the read**

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