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## *Otago Region Newsletter 7/2024*

### *July 2024*



**Remembering Peter Schweigman**

**The bird man of Otago**



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/birdsotago/>

## Ornithological Snippets

On 5 July there were multiple reports of an **Australasian Grebe/Tokitokipio** at Glendhu Bay, Lake Wanaka. In addition to the previously reported birds at Waikouaiti and Kaikorai Estuary, a **Little Black Shag/Kawau tūi** was seen on the Owaka River near Pounaweia on 13 July. A **White Heron/Kōtuku** was at Kaikorai Estuary 28 and 30 June.

A **Sacred Kingfisher/Kōtare** on 23 June in Wanaka town centre was unexpected. Janina Castro and Sila Viriyautsahakul saw a banded **NZ Falcon/Karearea** feeding on a Rock Pigeon in Dunedin Botanic Gardens on 25 June. The band was red, with the number 128. Beth Wishart reports 4 **Eastern Rosella** in a tree at Halfway Bush Primary School on 9 July. Please send any interesting reports to [cluthaphotos@gmail.com](mailto:cluthaphotos@gmail.com)



**Richard Schofield**

## **eBird News**

There have been a couple of minor changes to eBird recently. Regular users of the app will have noticed the new layout, with a cleaner appearance, and one or two rearrangements, but basically the functionality is much the same as previously.

And on the eBird website, zero species checklists now show up in the Recent Checklists column, whereas previously they remained hidden.

Finally, a reminder that if you have any bird count data, collected between 1 June 2019 – 31 May 2024, that can contribute to the Atlas please submit it to the Atlas eBird portal.

Please ensure all data is uploaded to the NZ Bird Atlas eBird Portal by the end of July 2024, as this is when analyses through modelling and mapping will commence.

**Richard 027 281 8701** or [cluthaphotos@gmail.com](mailto:cluthaphotos@gmail.com)

## **BirdsNZ Otago Branch News**

### **Peter Schweigman – bird man of Otago**

For very many decades the name Peter Schweigman was synonymous with OSNZ in Otago. He was an enthusiastic bird man, larger than life, and a quality field ornithologist, who contributed hugely to bird study in Otago. Peter was a mentor of many that are now themselves active in bird study and conservation. He introduced countless Birds NZ members to the enjoyment of studying birds, particularly hands-on experiences of banding birds. All of us who knew Peter will have stories of adventures we have had watching, catching, and banding birds with him. Peter repeatedly showed to family and friends that bird study was anything but a relaxing, leisurely, gentlemanly activity. Peter's bird study certainly had many adventurous moments. Whether it was bouncing out to Green Island in a small rubber boat, scrabbling ashore to work on steep muddy slopes (only the hardest souls would accompany him) or wading across estuaries at mid tide, Peter never gave up and expected all to engage and continue to observe and take notes.

It is the end of an era for Otago Birds with the passing on 17 June 2024 of Peter Schweigman.

He was Otago Regional Representative from 1984-1998 and a member of the Society's National Council from 1998 to 2000. He was awarded the Ornithological Society's Meritorious Service award in 2001.



Peter leaves a legacy of many significant datasets of bird surveys and sightings that contribute to our understanding of how bird populations have changed over the decades particularly in Otago. These include records of black-fronted dotterels, cattle egret, bittern, glossy ibis, royal spoonbills, SI robins, silvereyes and kingfisher. The data from all these studies are now recorded permanently on eBird as historic records so will be available for researchers forever.

He was a leader in developing many bird studies by the Otago Region. Peter coordinated and collated the data for the wader surveys for several decades. He coordinated the Otago Harbour study for the surveys in 1977-78 and 1988-89. He instigated many bird banding projects. He

was a keen and experienced bird bander, and banded thousands of birds over the years – robins on Flagstaff, variable oystercatchers around our coasts, silvereyes, godwits and royal spoonbills. He taught many of us the skills of setting up a mist nest or drop-box.



Taking robin measurements

Banding birds is just the beginning; resightings are the other crucial side of the story. Peter spent many hours looking for banded birds. His records of colour-banded bar-tailed godwits on the estuaries of Otago, originally marked here at Warrington and returning from Alaska, contributed hugely to our understanding of site-faithfulness of bar-tailed godwits.

Peter was a champion of the royal spoonbills, and was the main instigator for studying the increase in their numbers and expansion of nesting colonies in New Zealand since the early 1980's. Peter banded 60 nestlings at the colony on Green Island, which involved 18 quite treacherously adventurous trips via zodiac to the island between 1994-2005. Peter cajoled and enthused Birds NZ members throughout NZ to report sightings of these banded spoonbills.



Extracting silvereye from mist net

He himself spent countless hours on Otago's windswept estuaries resighting banded birds. This all paid off with over 1000 resightings reported, all meticulously collated by Peter for over 15 years. The pattern of resightings showed that adult royal spoonbills in New Zealand undertake repeated seasonal inter-island migration, moving north to wintering sites (mainly Parengarenga, Rangaunu and Whangarei), then relocating south again in summer to breeding sites. This work resulted in a scientific paper in *Notornis*.

In addition to this banding study, Peter coordinated eight nationwide counts between 1991-2012. He also documented colony locations and gathered information about nest numbers.



This coming summer Birds NZ is again undertaking a systematic count of colonies and nests. Birds NZ proposes to recognize the lasting legacy that Peter leaves to bird study in New Zealand by naming this survey, *The Peter Schweigman Memorial Royal Spoonbill Colony and Nest Count, 2024*.

**Contributed by Mary Thompson**

### **The Great Royal Spoonbill Search, Saturday 13 July.**

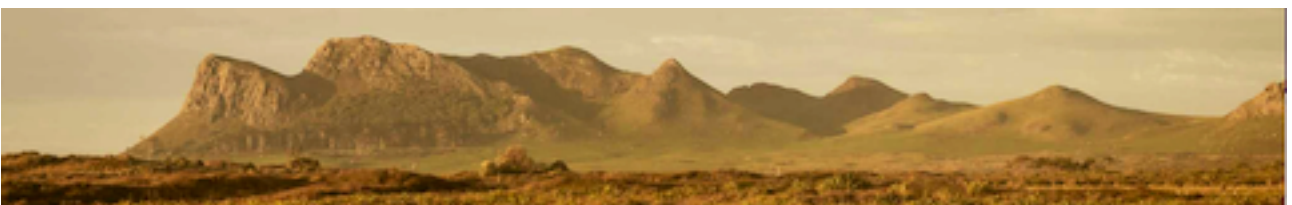
We had 7 teams, totalling at least 18 people, out looking from Oamaru in the north to Haldane in the south. Despite the very cold nor'easter, described as "outrageous" by the Peninsula team, everyone had a good time. Graeme managed to get to Shag River estuary overland rather than by kayak and got 3 spoonbills; the northern team got 3 at Hawksbury and 2 at Goodwood; Pounaweia team got 4 and the Kaikorai to Taieri Mouth got a lone spoonbill at Livingstone lagoon just south of Taieri Mouth. Their day started with 9 Little Black Shags roosting in the sun and shelter on the old bridge along with 7 Pied shags so that was a good omen for the day.

Total: 13. Well done everyone.



Photo credit: Zoe and Martine

## Hotel Chathams Tours



Hotel Chathams have reached out to let us know they have scheduled a 2025 birding tour, where Mike Bell will be hosting a group able to access locations which the normal tours do not venture into or include on their itinerary.

For details, follow the link below.

<https://hotelchathamstours.co.nz/tc-events/2025-annual-chatham-island-bird-tour/>

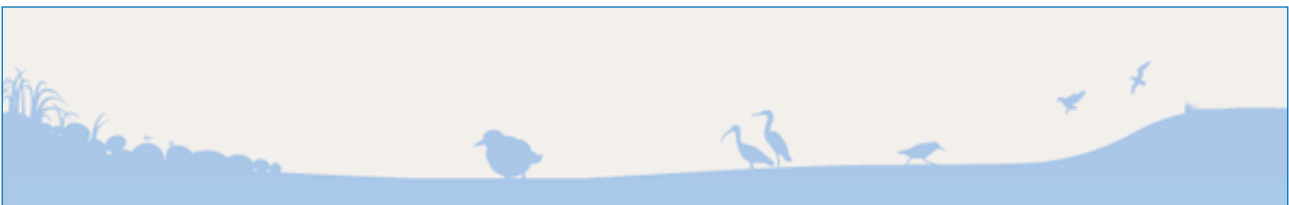
## Otago Wader Count (Winter) June 30 2024

	Karitane	Blueskin	Aramoana	Harbour West	Harbour East	Papanui Inlet	Hoopers Inlet	Catlins	Pleasant Rvr	Kaikorai Est.	Total 2024	Total 2023	Total 2022
South Island Pied O/C	31	364	80	198	71	36	22	363	20	8	<b>1193</b>	594	1070
Variable O/C	13	52	7	84	25	33	7	16	4	6	<b>247</b>	167	111
Pied Stilt	14	38	19			7	64	102	12	23	<b>279</b>	181	183
Banded Dotterel			48					41	54		<b>143</b>	129	180
Spur-winged Plover	7			4		25	3			2	<b>41</b>	44	162
Bar-tailed Godwit		68	57				156	49	8		<b>338</b>	266	299

Great weather for counting! Many thanks to all those who participated.

- Good numbers of SIPO at Blueskin and Catlins
- Godwits show a slight increase over previous two years
- High VOC count at Port Chalmers, approximately 70 of which were noted by Franny on a sandy drift seen from Observation Point
- High count of pied stilts in the Catlins

**Maree Johnstone**



## Wanted: Otago and Foveaux shags



Otago Shag Oscar Thomas

BirdsNZ member and Associate Professor Nic Rawlence, Director of the Otago Palaeogenetics Laboratory, Department of Zoology at University of Otago is calling for freshly dead Otago and Foveaux shags from Otago, Southland and Rakiura Stewart Island coastlines/ colonies.

Nic has a MSc student looking into the genetic underpinnings of the pied and bronze plumage in Otago and Foveaux shags.

They have a DOC permit that allows them to receive these and do genetic research on

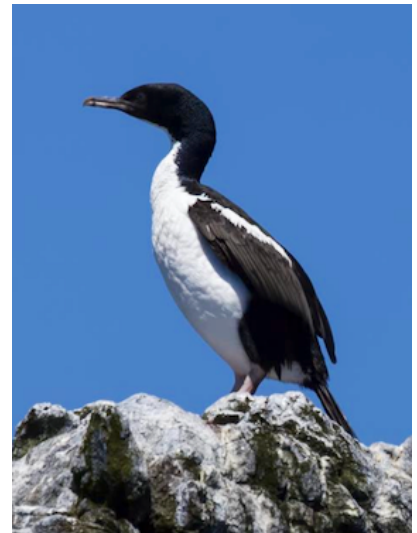
them so would appreciate it if our coastal members could keep an eye out for dead chicks, fledglings, juveniles, and adults that could be bagged and put in a freezer, and later and collected.

When the research is finished, the birds will be offered to Tūhura Otago Museum.

Remember to keep yourself safe by using PPE when handling dead birds and thoroughly wash hands etc afterwards.

Further information on beach finds can be found at <https://www.birdsnz.org.nz/schemes/beachpatrolscheme/>

Email [nic.rawlence@otago.ac.nz](mailto:nic.rawlence@otago.ac.nz)



Foveaux Shag David Rintoul



## Outside Orokonui Robin Monitoring 2024

The 8<sup>th</sup> year of monitoring kakaruai presence and breeding success at our study site outside Orokonui Ecosanctuary is due to begin Saturday 17 August. This is scheduled to be the last year of the project. We try to locate all robin territories, band robins, and monitor the breeding success of as many pairs as possible.

We meet every second Saturday morning between mid-August and December (dates are below), with carpooling options usually available. No previous experience is needed and, although the ability to walk off track is useful, it is not essential.

If you are interested in coming along and/or would like to join the mailing list to receive updates through the season, please email George ([gpickerell@outlook.com](mailto:gpickerell@outlook.com)).

Saturday dates for 2024:

17 & 31 August

14 & 28 September

12 & 26 October

9 & 23 November

7 December



Photo credit: Nick Beckwith

## Programme 2024

Birds NZ Otago meetings have returned to the **Benham Seminar Room, Department of Zoology, 340 Great King Street, Dunedin**

Birds NZ Otago Monthly Meeting Zoom Link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83922655184?pwd=QapM32iZ0YWPrKuNYdCKPWwaYS36eg.1>

Meeting ID: 839 2265 5184

Passcode: 633186

July	Tuesday	23	Dr Emma Williams	Birds beyond borders: Mobile threatened species
Aug	Tuesday	27	Vanessa Barry	Buller's albatross population genomics
Sept	Tuesday	24	Bruce McKinlay	Birds of the Solomon Islands
Oct	Tuesday	22	Te Arawhetu Waipoua	GPS tracking kuaka / Whenua Hou diving petrel
Nov	Tuesday	26	William Perry	Annual Quiz Night

**Regular Field trips** are held, usually on first Saturdays or Sundays. Check for details within the newsletters. We carpool for these trips and share expenses.

Suggestions for locations for field trips and atlassing trips, and offers to help lead trips would really be appreciated, please contact Dawn [birds.otago@birdsnz.org.nz](mailto:birds.otago@birdsnz.org.nz)

Contributions for the next newsletter should reach the editor by **20 August** [sodlin@gmail.com](mailto:sodlin@gmail.com)

### Disclaimer

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