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## *Otago Region Newsletter 9/2024*

### *September 2024*



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

### **Ornithological Snippets**

A very early Shining Cuckoo/Pīpīwharau was reported from Wanaka golf course on 30 August. A single Wrybill/Ngutu pare was at Pleasant River Estuary on 8 September. 2 Caspian Terns/Taranui were displaying near Kaitangata on 25 August, and one was among Black-billed Gulls at a potential colony north-west of Balclutha on 3 September, before the island was submerged by high river levels. A Little Black Shag/Kawau Tūi was reported from Purakaunui Bay on 3 September, along with a Reef Heron/Matuku moana; another Reef Heron was at Papatowai on the same day, and an immature at Roaring Bay on 8 September. A White Heron/Kōtuku continues to be seen in the Glenorchy area, with the latest sighting being on 23 August, on which date there was a Kākā in a Weston, Oamaru, garden.

Please send any interesting reports to [cluthaphotos@gmail.com](mailto:cluthaphotos@gmail.com)

**Richard Schofield**

## eBird News

### eBird Big Day

This year's spring (for the southern hemisphere) Big Day is Saturday 12 October. In May Otago topped the NZ standings with 73 species – now that spring is here (hopefully!) let's see if we can beat that total. If you are visiting multiple locations, why not create a Trip Report, so that all your observations for the day are in one place.

### Birder of the Month challenge

It's not too late to take part in the September eBirder of the Month challenge. This involves submitting checklists with rated sound recordings – 20 eligible checklists in the month puts you in the draw. If you haven't done any audio before, it's very easy – all you need is a smartphone, and all the instructions are on the eBird website, or you can contact me directly.

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

## BirdsNZ Otago Branch News

### Health & Safety

BirdsNZ Council have asked for Regional newsletters to include a standing request to report on Health & Safety issues.

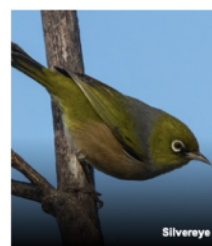
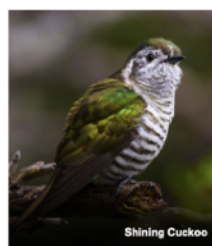
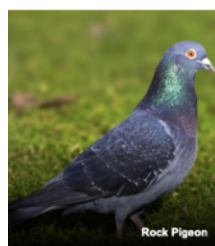


A reminder to members that when involved with organised BirdsNZ Field Trips and activities, that we should not hesitate to call 111 to respond to medical events or incidents that result in harm.

If anyone has been involved in or is aware of an incident that resulted in harm to any of our activity participants, please contact the Regional Representative, so that the President and EO can be notified immediately

Plan ahead, stay safe while birding everyone.

Dawn: [birds.otago@birdsNZ.org.nz](mailto:birds.otago@birdsNZ.org.nz). 027 442 7348



## Notes from the Regional Representative

### Queenstown Birding



On Saturday, 31 August, our RR Dawn Palmer led a birding field trip to support the Whakatipu Wildlife Trust. There were 10 of us in all. As we stood on the Jardines to Jack's Point track learning how to share an eBird list, a falcon made a spectacular, silent stooping flight right over our heads, capping off a beautiful morning of birding. Tui, bellbirds, grey warblers, fantails, little pied shag, harriers and paradise shelduck were the native species seen and heard, <https://ebird.org/checklist/S193623928>.

### Birding in Paradise



Unfortunately, we had to cancel our Birding in Paradise field trip on 13-15 September. 14 people had registered to attend with two others in Queenstown expressing interest in joining us after the trip was full. However, winter was not quite done with us in the mountains. The Paradise Trust site just north of Glenorchy is a bit of a hidden gem and they were brilliant to deal with, so we'll call it a postponement and aim to use all the planning another time.

Check out the site on their facebook page, so you can see how much snow fell on Thursday before our trip - here's one of their photos taken Friday morning; <https://www.facebook.com/paradisetrustnz>

### Matuku Muster

The Bittern Conservation Trust (BCT) are carrying out a national survey of Australasian Bittern/Matuku-hūrepo (Matuku Muster) this spring, with counts

around 19 October and 16 November. If you are interested in taking part, either contact the BCT at [bitternconservationnz@gmail.com](mailto:bitternconservationnz@gmail.com), or let me know and I can supply further information.

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

## Quarantine Island/Kamautaurua Kōanga /Spring bird counts



Kia ora koutou fellow QI/KT bird counters & friends,

I hope you are keeping well.

I'm starting to plan for the Quarantine Island/Kamautaurua Kōanga /Spring bird counts.

For those of you who don't know, over the past 6 or so years we have carried out fortnightly 5-minute bird counts on the island's 9 bird count sites during Spring (October-December) and Autumn (May-July) on either a Saturday or Sunday or a weekday. Derek Onley and Francesca Cunninghame and others helped me set up these counts which I now lead.

The main purpose of the counts is to engage others in the enjoyment of watching and listening to birds, and observing any changes from year to year. The counts are also (eventually) uploaded to *New Zealand Bird Atlas/e-Bird*. **If anyone is keen to help me with this let me know.**

It usually takes about 2 hours to do all 9 bird count sites around the island.

We do a 5-minute count at each site, starting around 10am, depending upon boat transfers.

I will make a call the day before, as the counts are weather dependent, and we won't go if it's raining or very windy. I will make an alternative date if the weather isn't favourable. I book the boat transfers (\$20pp return, or there may be a possible subsidy of \$10pp return). The boat leaves from Back Beach in Port Chalmers with a possible Portobello pontoon pick up by arrangement. Let me know if you could assist in car pooling or need a ride to Port Chalmers. We usually spend the whole day on the island leaving around 3.30pm, or there can be an early afternoon return boat option leaving the island at around 1pm, subject to availability.

Possible dates (weather & boat transfer dependent)

Saturday 5th October or Sunday 6th October

Saturday 19th or Sunday 20th October

Saturday 2nd or Sunday 3rd November

Saturday 16th or Sunday 17th November  
Saturday 30th November or Sunday 1st December

If you think you might be interested in joining in, please let me know, and let me know your contact phone number.

Kā mihi nui, nā Claire Hagglund (Secretary)  
Email: [secretary.quarantineisland@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.quarantineisland@gmail.com)

## Booming Bitterns 2024



Otago Birds NZ is working with ORC and others to survey Otago wetlands for presence of bitterns and crakes. Last year we placed recorders at over 60 locations in coastal Otago, Catlins and Whakatipu area. Many of these sites will be surveyed again this year as well as several new ones.

Bittern survey fieldwork will commence in October and run through to December. We need people that have time to travel to wetlands to place automatic recorders in the wetlands and to return 3 weeks later to retrieve the SD cards, replace batteries and redeploy for a further 3 weeks. This may require walking on rough wet ground for up to 4 or 5 km, but mainly on the flat.

It would be great if we have teams of 3 or 4 people who can commit to looking after surveying one particular wetland, so there is back-up of people who know where the recorders are located. **Check out the locations and dates below and let Mary know how, when and where you can be involved. Email [nzmaryt@gmail.com](mailto:nzmaryt@gmail.com)**

It's really important if you wish to come on any of the trips, or help with bittern monitoring, that you 'register' with Mary so you can get further info about meeting places, times, etc.

Locations and field trips for the 2024 Season

### **Maniototo**                      **Saturday 19 October**

We will be helping members of *Tiaki Maniototo* place 5 or 6 recorders in upper Taieri scroll plains near Patearoa. This is a chance to explore the hinterland of Otago. If we get a chance, we will do some crane playback surveys too. 4WD vehicles might be helpful.

Please let Mary know if you plan to come; more details nearer the time.

### **Takitakitoa Wetland**              **Monday 28 October (Labour Day)**

Field trip for all members

This is a Fish and Game restoration project near Henley, and they have given permission to access this private wetland).

We also need 2-3 people who are free to go back to refurbish and collect recorders (17/18 or 19 Nov and 8/9 or 10 December).

Please let Mary know if you plan to come; more details nearer the time.

**Lake Tuakitoto** We need 2-3 people who are free to travel to the lake on week days on at least 2 of these dates within a set

Wed/Thurs October 9/10	OR	Oct 16/17
Wed/Thurs October 30/31		Nov 6/7
Wed/Thurs November 20/21		Nov 27/28

If you did NOT receive this information in a recent email from me sent to the Bittern Team, and would like to be on the Bittern Team email list please let me know. We have many new members since last year and you are most welcome to join in this project.

[nzmaryt@gmail.com](mailto:nzmaryt@gmail.com)

## The Peter Schweigman Memorial Royal Spoonbill Colony and Nest Count, 2024

The increase in kōtuku ngutupapa/royal spoonbill population suggests there will be an increase in number and size of nesting colonies. This November and December a systematic, coordinated nationwide survey will be undertaken to locate royal spoonbill colonies and count the number of birds in attendance and the number of active nests.



Photo credit: Nick Beckwith

Otago region will have an important role to play in this survey.

The spoonbills should be returning from their wintering grounds in the north to Otago in late October for nesting. The Otago region was one of the earliest to witness the expansion of spoonbill colonies in 1980s with colonies first at Moeraki (1984), then Green Island, Taieri Island, Taiaroa Heads and Nugget Point. Many of these places are hard to get to. Peter Schweigman instigated study of these colonies and the survey is named in his memory.

### Survey Plans

We are fortunate that we have a very kind offer from Chris L alas to include photographing spoonbill colonies during his fly-over of the Otago coast for his annual surveys of red-billed gull colonies. This is hugely appreciated. We will try to do some ground proofing for accessible colonies: Taiaroa from the Monarch, Maukiekie from Moeraki side, and we will hold a weekend field trip to survey the Nugget's colony and previous colony locations at False Islet and Rainbow Isle.

Weekend Field Trip to Nugget Point and Catlins: 7 and 8 December 2024.

**Accommodation** overnight Saturday 7 December at DOC house on Nugget Point. (first in, first accepted for DOC house; 6 beds plus some mattresses: contact Mary [nzmaryt@gmail.com](mailto:nzmaryt@gmail.com) ). Or book own accommodation at local B&B/motel.

### Saturday 7 December

Head down to Tautuku and check out Rainbow Islet; then back via False Islets at Cannibal Bay where there was a colony 10 years ago (apparently not active recently). Another team is to head to Waikawa Harbour to check out a possible colony. Return to Nugget Point for accommodation and check the colony there. Any spare time we could try for crakes with playback.

### Sunday 8 December

Spend morning looking at colony and whatever else takes our fancy (seabird watching) and meet with day trippers at noon for an end-of-year pot-luck lunch (at DOC house area). Head home via any possible wetland/swamp areas to check for crakes eg Tuakitoto.

Day trip: to Nugget Point for end-of-year potluck picnic lunch at noon with everyone. For those unable to join for whole weekend, please plan to come for the day.

## SO MANY WAYS TO HELP OUR BIRDS



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**



## 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

Sept	Tuesday 24	Bruce McKinlay	Birds of the Solomon Islands
Oct	Saturday 12	Spring Big Day	Info in eBird
Oct	Tuesday 22	Te Arawhetu Waipoua	GPS tracking Kuaka / Whenua Hou diving petrel
Nov	Tuesday 26	William Perry	Annual Quiz Night
Dec	Sat & Sun 7 & 8	Weekend Field trip to Nugget Point and beyond. Spoonbill nesting colonies and crake surveys. More information in this newsletter.	

**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 **15 October** [sodlin@gmail.com](mailto:sodlin@gmail.com)

### Disclaimer

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