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Otago Region Newsletter 11/2024

November 2024



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

Ornithological Snippets

Claire Hagglund reports that a few **Canada Geese/Kuihi** were seen paddling around Kamautaurua/ Quarantine Island on 1 November. Claire also reports 2 **Royal Spoonbill/ Kōtuku Ngutupapa** there on 2 November, possibly nesting; **Little Shags/Kawaupaka** had moved to the same location; and notes that **NZ Fantail/Piwakwaka** were in smaller numbers than usual.

Elsewhere **Long-tailed Cuckoos/Koekoeā** were reported from Queenstown on 24 and 28 October, with the only other record from Haast Pass on 9 November. 2 **Black Stilt/Kakī** were seen at Makarora on 14 November.

A **Snares Crested Penguin/Pokotiwaha** was off Taiaroa Head on 25 October. A **Little Black Shag/Kawau Tūi** was reported from Titri Creek, Waihola on 12 November. An **Australasian Bittern/Matuku-hūrepo** was photographed on 16 November in the Cardrona Valley, and a **Reef Heron/Matuku moana** was at Shag Point on 2 November

Finally larger than usual numbers of **Welcome Swallow/Warou** were observed feeding over Lake Hayes in late September.

Please send any interesting reports to cluthaphotos@gmail.com

Richard Schofield

eBird News

Audio Media Targets for Merlin

In order to make the Merlin app more useful in New Zealand, many more recordings of NZ birds are required – 100 or more recordings of each species are required to train the software to identify bird sounds. As previously mentioned, fancy equipment is not required to record audio, and perfectly acceptable recordings can be made just with a smartphone. Further information on how to go about helping can be found on the NZ eBird home page, or at <https://ebird.org/region/NZ/post/audio-media-targets-for-aotearoa-new-zealand>

Māori Bird Names in eBird

For anyone who is interested, Māori bird names are available as an option when entering data in the app (on Android, at least). The common English name is shown alongside. Just go to Settings > Common Name Language, and scroll down to Māori.

Richard 027 281 8701 or 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 027 442 7348

Annual quiz night

The Birds NZ Otago annual quiz night will be this Tuesday 26th November run by Will Perry! Taking place in the Benham Seminar Room, Department of Zoology from 7:30pm sharp. Please bring something sweet to share, and if you're keen to join other Birds Otago members for dinner at Joe's Garage beforehand let Maureen know by Sunday 24th Nov so she can confirm our booking. Everyone welcome!

Maureen Howard: mo4planet@gmail.com / 021 206 3593

February 2025

Our February meeting will be an 'Ornithological Potpourri' - member's summer birding highlights! Please send Oscar a selection of photos or slides (up to 5 or 10 minutes) to include in the presentation before **Tuesday 25 February**.

Oscar Thomas: oscarkokako@gmail.com.

Wader Count

Volunteers wanted for a summer wader count on Sunday 24 November.

High tide (1.9M) at Dunedin is at 11.49am.

The reserve day is Sunday 15 December.

High tide (1.99M) at Dunedin is late afternoon at 4.51pm.

All members and interested parties are welcome to participate.

Please contact Maree Johnstone email mareej@kinect.co.nz or phone 027 6609446 to be assigned to a team.



Notes from the Regional Representative

Kerry-Jayne Wilson ~ New Zealand Seabirds

Potton and Burton Books are donating their remaining copies (~1200) of Kerry-Jayne Wilson's book '[New Zealand Seabirds, A Natural History](#)' to Birds NZ free of charge, to sell or give to members. It is suggested that any funds raised be donated to a charity close to Kerry-Jayne's heart (suggestions to follow).

The books are held by the distributors in Auckland and need clearing by the end of this month! Chris Thompson has kindly offered to help collate all orders and arrange shipping.

Freight cost per carton:

AKL = \$10.87 incl. GST

N.I. = \$15.90 incl. GST

S.I. = \$20.72 incl. GST
(extra for rural delivery)

If you are interested in receiving one or more cartons (16 books each) to distribute and sell on to members in your region, then please send Chris chrisandpeter@hotmail.com these details **by 21 November**: Branch, Contact person name, email address, phone number, courier address, number of cartons. The distributors will invoice you, and once payment is received the books will be despatched.

News items:

- New Funder sought for Birds NZ Research Fund:
 - birdsanz.org.nz/news/new-funder-sought-for-the-birds-new-zealand-research-fund/
- BBO Warden Vacancies:
 - birdsanz.org.nz/news/bbo-warden-vacancies/
- Give the gift of birds this Christmas:
 - birdsanz.org.nz/news/christmas-gift/

Newsletters:

- Canterbury Newsletter: birdsanz.org.nz/news/canterbury-newsletter-wrybill/
- Otago Newsletter: birdsanz.org.nz/news/otago-newsletter/
- Nelson Newsletter: birdsanz.org.nz/news/nelson-newsletter/
- Manawatu Newsletter: birdsanz.org.nz/news/manawatu-newsletter/

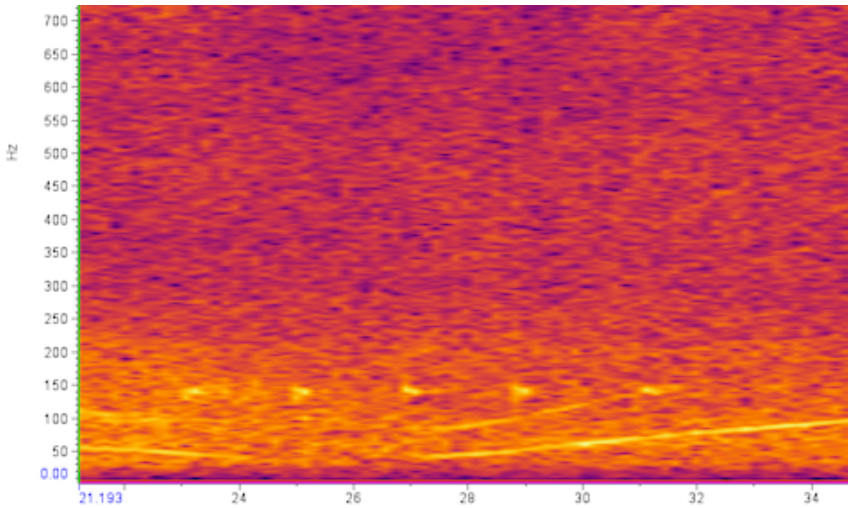
Australasian Bittern/Matuku-hūrepo

BirdsNZ Otago would like to acknowledge the support and sponsorship of Otago Regional Council for the ongoing Bittern Inventory project in Otago, and Scott Jarvie. About 85 devices purchased by ORC are currently deployed in promising wetlands in the Catlins, Coastal Otago, Maniototo, Wanaka and Whakatipu.

This is a substantial undertaking and is being supported by volunteer and collaborative efforts of our membership, including Mary Thompson, Sue, Ben, Daragh, Richard Schoefield, Maree Johnston, Adrienne Mulqueen, Joy Liddicoat, Georgina Pickerell, myself, Ulises Cabrera, Franny Cunninghame, the intrepid Niko, and Fergus Sutherland with Gavin White from Forest and Bird, Eilis Hogan and Colin from Tiaki Maniototo, Paul Pope and his team out at the Te Nohoaka o Tukiaua / Sinclair Wetlands, Wendy Ambury from Love Bittern. I hope I haven't missed anyone.

Thanks to DOC for permits to place the acoustic devices on public conservation land, landowners who have granted access to private wetlands and wetlands on high country stations, and to the DOC technical support team for help with the data sampling of the 1000s of hours of recordings and their analysis.

Its been really encouraging to learn that Franny's Catlins team at Forest and Bird heard bittern during active listening on the Matuku Muster in October, we look forward to listening to the recordings from the ARDs that were deployed and recording at the time.



Also previously noted, are detections at Sinclair Wetland and Lake Tuakitoto. A completely coincidental sighting of the bittern in the Cardrona Valley on the day of the November Matuku Muster provides a wonderful boost for the western lakes areas where the elusive bittern are occasionally being seen we hope that we

will also hear them in the habitats being inventoried! A training example sample of a sound spectrograph of a bittern boom train (5 booms) on a windy night with traffic noise is seen in the photo attached.

If you see a bittern, please do reach out to bitterns.otago@gmail.com or Dawn birds.otago@birds.nz.

Birding with the Whakatipu Wildlife Trust



On 16th November, eight people gathered to go birding along the Lower Shotover River. We followed the Queenstown Trail, looked out over the confluence of the Shotover and Kawarau Rivers - both with continuing high flows, and then birded past the Shotover Wetland where restoration planting undertaken by the Shotover Primary School and Wakatipu Reafforestation

Trust is improving the Sedgeland and Raupo habitat. Plenty of blackbirds and song thrushes were out with chaffinches, redpoll, greenfinch, goldfinch, and California quail, as well as black shags, black-billed gulls sitting on seven nests, South Island pied oystercatchers, paradise shelduck, grey teal, mallards, silvereyes, and fantails. We had hoped to see or hear black-fronted terns, kotare/ kingfishers, shining cuckoos, harriers or falcons but were denied these on the day. We think it's just a matter of time before the marsh crake in nearby Lake Hayes habitats finds its way to the Shotover wetland.

Dawn Palmer

Quarantine Island/Kamautaurua Kōanga /Spring bird counts



quarantineisland.org.nz

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

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 on 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 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.

Join us for some volunteering motu mahi, and/or explore, relax and recharge on Kamautaurua with *Quarantine Island/Kamau Taurua Community Inc.* **on Saturday 23 November.**

If you would like to come along, please complete this [Booking Form](#) to secure your place and we will be in touch on Thursday or Friday to confirm.

Cristina Barriga

Volunteer Coordinator Phone: 0226968476

Peter Schweigman Memorial Royal Spoonbill Colony and Nest Count 2024



Photo Credit: Nick Beckwith

Survey Plans

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

Further to the details in our October newsletter, the DOC house at the Nuggets is booked, and if there are more people than beds, there is ample mattress/camp mattress space on the floor inside, or people are welcome to camp.

The suggested plan is:

Saturday 7 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 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.

Franny Cunninghame has taken on the lead role as weekend coordinator so if you are planning to join this weekend, let please email Franny by **30th November**.

Email francescacunninghame@gmail.com

Nesting Birds



Nugget Point Spoonbills. Late October, 10 pairs, many less than 2 years ago

Karitane: nesting oyster catcher, October

Photo credit: Martine Darrou



Australasian Bittern/Matuku-hūrepo



We spotted this bittern on the side of Cardrona Valley Road yesterday, Saturday 16 Nov 2024 at about 4pm.

It flew off over the fence and paddock to the north-east, landing near some sprayed out gorse. Here's a google pin of where we saw it as well:

<https://goo.gl/maps/k6P9aBbioaie56Vz7>

Katie Foxley



Photo credit: Chris Lalas
Little Black Shags



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The team at **The Grebe Project** are selling beautiful T-shirts to help promote their work and raise funds to continue. They need your help....

The Project's work focuses on building and maintaining custom-made floating nest platforms. **Southern Crested Grebes / Pūteketeke** are a threatened bird species. Grebes have learned to use the platforms to build nests on. The anchored platforms won't flood, sink or float away when the lake level changes.

More than 600 grebe eggs have already hatched on the nest platforms since 2013. The grebe population has gone from two to 170 on Lake Wānaka since the project started 11 years ago!

T-shirt sales close on **24th November 2024**. Order yours by going to www.theprintroom.nz/collections/grebe-project or scan the QR code below.

Follow us on Facebook!
["The Lake Wanaka Grebes"](#)

Check out our website:
www.wanakagrebes.org.nz



Purchases helps keep the Love Bittern Project van moving around Aotearoa to support community led conservation of Australasian Bittern ...and helps us to raise awareness for this elusive and critically endangered (that's one step from extinction) species!

To ensure your orders arrive before Christmas, please place your orders by **December 10th**

The Christmas Shearwater

The Christmas Shearwater, is a species of shearwater found around tropical and subtropical islands in the Pacific Ocean, including Christmas Island.

This bird has a festive name but a rather drab appearance with an entirely dark brown body plumage.



Christmas Shearwaters eat fish and other aquatic prey. They depend on oceanic predators, like tuna, to drive small fish and other small creatures upwards where the shearwater can snatch prey either at the surface or after a short and shallow hunting pursuit. To help them retain their prey, Christmas Shearwaters have specialised indentations on their tongues and along the back of their beaks.

<https://www.birdorable.com/blog/2020-bonanza-bird-32-christmas-shearwater>



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

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 crane surveys. More information in this newsletter.

Programme 2025

Feb Tuesday 25 Members Ornithological Potpourri
Your summer birding highlights!

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

Contributions for the next newsletter should reach the editor by **21 January** sodlin@gmail.com

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