

KUAKA



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

Te Kahui Matai Manu o Aotearoa

Issue 63 – November 2024

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The photo on the right, from our Awhitu Correspondent, Kate, shows the steps taken to protect a tuturiwhatu nest on the beach.

This is our last newsletter for 2024, you can look forward to its return in February.

Have a great Christmas and New Year and we look forward to catching up in a couple of months

Our next meeting will be in February 2025
More details to come

Would you 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.



PROGRAMME FOR 2025

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

Jan tba	Annual BBQ. Date and venue TBA
Feb 11	First meeting for 2025. AGM, Group discussion on sightings and interesting birding tit bits
Mar 11	TBA



SPEAKER FOR NOV 2024



Our speaker this month was Kristal Cain, who gave a talk about the research on titipounau/rifleman that her team at Auckland University has been conducting, with a focus on vocal learning. Most animals communicate with unlearned, innate vocalisations, while vocal learners include humans, whales and dolphins, elephants and bats. Scientists traditionally assumed birds were split into two groups -- those which can learn sounds (parrots, songbirds, and hummingbirds) and those which can't.

The team monitored the nests of titipounamu at Boundary Stream Mainland Island in the Hawke's Bay over three summers. Nests are often built in very hard to access areas, and they did build nest boxes so they could try cross-fostering chicks, but this was unsuccessful. However, they were able to identify and band individuals and then record more than 6,800 of the feeding calls routinely made by adult birds bringing food to the young nestlings (parents are sometimes helped by an unrelated bird, usually male). They used spectrograms and compared genetic information to populations in other regions. They found that the young took a while to sound like adults, and that distantly related birds that lived near each other tended to sound more similar than close relatives living far apart. That suggests the birds' sounds may not be innate and may be learned from each other. Scientists have estimated that vocal learning in songbirds evolved 30-50 million years ago. But the songbirds and parrots diverged long before that – closer to 80 million years ago. The NZ wrens likely existed in Aotearoa since before the islands broke away from Gondwanaland, roughly 80 million years ago. Kristal suggests that if New Zealand wrens are vocal learners, then it is likely that the common ancestor of parrots and songbirds was also capable of rudimentary learning.



Unrelated to the talk outlined above, is this ultraviolet photo of a titipounau. The photograph shows patterning invisible to the human eye (but visible to other titipounau).

Unfortunately, the editor did not keep a record of the source of this photo and is unable to relocate it online.

RR REPORT FOR NOV 2024

November is a busy month with summer wader censuses already completed at Firth of Thames and Coromandel Peninsula, and coming up at Manukau Harbour this weekend. We are seeing a decline in the number of volunteers joining in, which makes it challenging to cover all of the sites, so would be **keen to hear from anyone who is able to help out in future**, especially if you are experienced in counting large flocks of birds.

Unusual birds seen at FOT were two gull-billed tern, two common tern and a far eastern curlew. I also noticed an Australasian shoveler with nine ducklings on the lake at the Shorebird Centre, which turned out to be the first breeding record there for this species. While driving up the Coromandel Peninsula to do censuses at Colville Bay and Coromandel Harbour, I stopped several times along the Thames Coast Road. It was great to see over 500 Kawau tikitiki/spotted shag roosting on the rocks between Tararu and Whakatete Bay, and most of the beaches had VOC and tuturiwhatu/NZ dotterel nesting, and some with chicks. The local dotterel minders seem to be doing a good job of erecting signs and fences to warn the public. There were also plenty of tara/white-fronted tern roosting and a solitary matuku moana/reef heron.

Last month I joined a couple of our members in listening out for matuku booming at Lake Pokorua on Awhitu Peninsula at dawn and dusk. The habitat looked suitable and although there were plenty of other birds on the lake and farmland, there was no sign of matuku. Other members went to locations around Mataitai and Whitford and heard one bird.

Around home, two blackbird chicks have avoided the clutches of my cat and moved away to other gardens, but I enjoy listening to the father bird sitting in my tree most nights singing out for another mate. I'm not so sure if I enjoy the sound of a nearby tui which makes the same seven note call from dawn to dusk every day, even though it's nice to know they are around!

I wish you all a very enjoyable Christmas and New Year break.

SIGHTINGS

- About a dozen dead shearwater were found at Pokorua Gap recently. Three were brought to the meeting and identified as two titi/sooty shearwater and one rako/Bullers shearwater.
- Our speaker also mentioned that over 50 mostly titi had washed up on the west coast north of Auckland about the same time. Initial investigations by Auckland University suggest malnourishment
- Tuturiwhatu/NZ dotterel have been nesting at various locations including Big Bay, Wattle Bay and Colbeck Spit on Awhitu Peninsula, Pavilion Drive and Kirkbride Rd near the airport, Mitre 10 in Onehunga, and Yashili dairy factory grounds in Pokeno, with some producing chicks.



All right mate, back off, this is my bird!

From the 2024 Comedy /wildlife Phototgraphy Awards
www.comedywildlifephoto.com

2024



SCIENCE FOR CONSERVATION 341

Conservation management of the critically endangered matuku-hūrepo / Australasian bittern

A review of threats and preliminary management techniques

Emma M. Williams



Swampbird Research

3d · 🌐

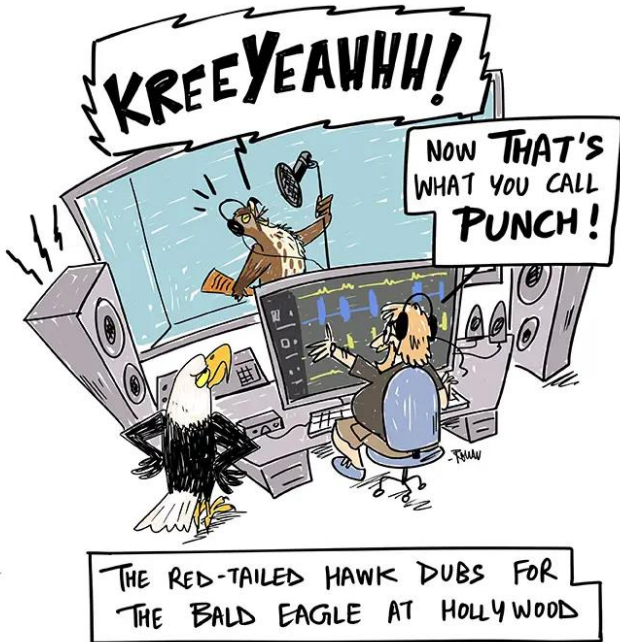
Just published... A summary of what we know about matuku-hurepo/Bittern and how to manage them.

Get your copy here:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/385008788_Conservation_management_of_the_critically_endangere_d_matuku-hurepo_Australasian_bittern_A_review_of_threats_and_preliminary_management_techniques

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/about-us/science-publications/series/science-for-conservation/>

#birds #birdwatching #birding #baldeagle
#redtailedhawk #raptors #birdsofprey
#cartoons #greenhumour #USA



Fun-fact: the majestic squeal you hear with every Hollywood footage of a Bald Eagle, is actually that of a Red-tailed Hawk! Here's what a Bald Eagle actually sounds like (<https://xeno-canto.org/species/Haliaeetus-leucocephalus> - a squirrel more than an eagle!).

Funnily enough, Red-tailed Hawk stock recordings have even appeared against Black Kite montage in Hindi cinema!



Whiskered Tern on crash landing
From the 2024 Comedy /wildlife Phototgraphy Awards
www.comedywildlifephotography.com



Another tuturiwhatu nest up Awhitu way – note the egg

Thanks Kate, for the photos

Unfortunately, not everything up Awhitu way is positive!





New Zealand Fairy Tern Charitable Trust



7 Oct 2024 · 🌐

We say No to the Sand Mining proposal in Bream Bay that is heading for the Fastrack gate . Please sign the petition from ES [org.nz](https://www.endangeredspecies.org.nz) if you care for our environment

<https://www.endangeredspecies.org.nz/sign-petition-stop-sandmining-bream-bay>



TAIHAPE BIRD SIGNS



There are 33 streets in Taihape named after endemic, native and naturalised birds. Back in 2015 the “Birds on Signs Project” was a community-based art project to showcase those birds.

Here are some of the results:



Birds on Signs Project added 30 new photos — in **Taihape**.
 Sep 11, 2015 · 🌐

Fifteen aluminium birds, created by local artists, being erected above their correspondingly named street signs. - in **Taihape**.



Missel thrush temporarily on Thrush St until it migrated to Missel St

QLDS TOONDAH WETLANDS

Its not just NZ that has problems protecting wildlife habitat.

Toondah development in Queensland has been shelved, but it doesn't mean other wetlands are safe

By environment reporter [Peter de Kruijff](#)

ABC Science Science and Technology

Mon 22 Apr



Bar-tailed godwits are one of the important migratory birds which use the intertidal areas of Toondah Harbour in Queensland

In short: A planned development of a protected Ramsar wetland in Queensland has been scrapped almost 10 years after first being proposed. An analysis shows large developments in Australian Ramsar sites have been knocked back whether they are coal, renewable or tourism related.

The Toondah Harbour project would have destroyed about 50 hectares of mangroves and mudflats in the Ramsar site to make way for 3,000 apartments, a 400-berth marina, retail outlets and a hotel.

What's next? Australia is lagging in declaring new Ramsar sites despite many unlisted wetlands being eligible. Under Australia's federal environment laws there's not much you can't get approval for when it comes to clearing land for development. More than 3,500 projects have been approved under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act compared to just 30 rejections. But one of the few things often deemed unacceptable to clear is crucial habitat in Australia's 67 wetlands of international significance, otherwise known as Ramsar sites.

Analysis by ABC Science found Toondah Harbour would have been the 10th project refused under the EPBC Act for its potential to negatively impact a Ramsar site. Most proposals to clear habitat in Ramsar sites, whether it's for a retirement village, coal port or massive renewable energy zone, have been rejected.

But getting on the vaunted Ramsar list is no easy process.

PENNANT-WINGED NIGHTJAR

Thought you might like to see this manu.

It is a species of night-jar that occurs from Nigeria to northern South Africa.

It is an intra-African migrant.



Female



Male



Thanks for reading Kuaka issue # 63, November 2024

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Help our newsletter work towards a brighter future by sending us your feedback.

Just drop an email to the editor.

Maybe you are able to contribute – a photo or two, or even an article

just drop an email to the editor.

**Have a good Christmas and New Year
We will catch up again in 2025**

*Don't forget to check out our
Facebook page*

